

Novels by
Payne Erskine

JOYFUL HEATHERBY
THE MOUNTAIN GIRL
WHEN THE GATES LIFT
UP THEIR HEADS

JOYFUL HEATHERBY

BY

PAYNE ERSKINE

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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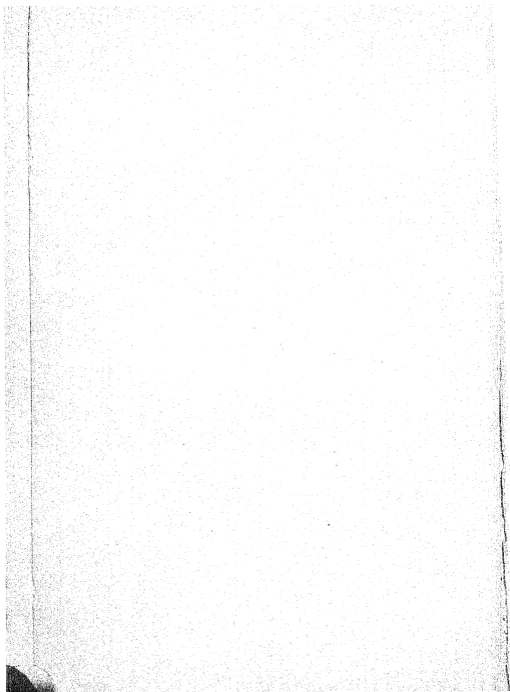
CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. SKIED	I
II. A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING	28
III. HEATHERBY'S BOY	41
IV. "ICI NOUS SOMMES HEUREUX"	56
V. MIXED EMOTIONS	82
VI. JOYFUL'S LADYE FAIRE	98
VII. IN THE BARN STUDIO	113
VIII. JACK STODDARD'S WOOING	125
IX. JOYFUL'S SECRET	143
X. A MYSTERIOUS ASSAULT	159
XI. CONFLICTING SENTIMENTS	179
XII. THE END OF AN IDYLL	191
XIII. MARK RETURNS TO THE WORLD	208
XIV. A TOUCH OF WORLDLY WISDOM	226
XV. PREMONITIONS FULFILLED	237
XVI. ENSNARED	252
XVII. AFTER THE MANNER OF THE WORLD	264
XVIII. A REBUFF	280
XIX. RENEWED ASPIRATIONS	295
XX. JOYFUL FINDS A PROTECTOR	300
XXI. A MODERN KNIGHT	311
XXII. MRS. BING'S BLUNDERS	325

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIII. MRS. RENOLDS DISCOVERS A MYSTERY . . .	336
XXIV. A CHANCE MEETING	346
XXV. SUNRISE ON A HILLTOP	359
XXVI. JOYFUL'S NEW HOME	372
XXVII. OVERTAXED	388
XXVIII. AN AMBITIOUS WOMAN'S HUSBAND	401
XXIX. MARIE VAILE'S RELEASE	411
XXX. MRS. RENOLDS SOLVES THE MYSTERY . . .	422
XXXI. SURRENDER	436

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

He kissed her, and they took their way in silence	<i>Frontispiece</i>
He was rewarded by another glimpse of her face .	17
Jack was close beside her. She could feel his breath upon her cheek.	135
Joyful was moved for the first time to active responsiveness	269



JOYFUL HEATHERBY

CHAPTER I

SKIED

"What skills it if a bag of stones or gold
About thy neck do drown thee? Raise thy head;
Take stars for money,—stars not to be told
By any art, yet to be purchased.
None is so wasteful as the scraping dame;
She loseth three for one,—her soul, rest, fame.

Pitch thy behavior low, thy projects high;
So shalt thou humble and magnanimous be:
Sink not in spirit; who aimeth at the sky
Shoots higher much than he that means a tree.
A grain of glory mixed with humbleness
Cures both a fever and lethargicness."

—GEORGE HERBERT.

RARE and sweet are genuine spring days in our austere New England climate, days when the air breathes of expectation, and glory to come is half revealed in the touches of brighter color gleaming through the blue grays of the budding woodlands. There are mortals who starve for nature and long with irresistible desire for the woods and fields—for bird songs, and the sound of lapping water among the stones. Mark Thorn was one of these. Spring had come tardily and dealt her favors sparingly this year, and when he went out a bitter wind cut through

him, as bitter and keen as the disappointment which had tortured him ever since the last exhibit when his pictures had been skied and no one had paused before them or given them a second look, — as bitter and keen as the pain which cut to his very heart when Louise Parsons passed by him with the words, "Why don't you get to work and really do something, Mark?"

He had turned on her in ill-concealed rage covered with sarcasm which she chose to consider only a flagrant piece of ill temper. "If I had painted those pictures which are tucked out of sight in that dark corner, in Paris instead of here, they would have been hung where those daubs are that you are pretending to admire now, and you would be saying, 'Mark, how much you have accomplished!'"

"Then why did n't you paint them in Paris?"

Mark threw out his hands in disgust and turned away, then turned back. "Can we never be loyal?" he asked. "Are we always to hail from abroad or go without notice? Are we never to have any art of our own? Louise, you ought to know, if you do not, that my pictures are better than these."

"I know they are not bad, Mark, but then they don't seem to appeal to others, and there must be some reason. We can't set aside the judgment of critics and the public as worth nothing. I would rather praise your pictures than any one's else; you know that."

"Yes. I know if all the world were praising mine, you would go down on your knees to them; that is, if the world were praising them enough."

Louise lifted her shoulders and her beautiful chin, and slipping her arm through her stepmother's, led her away.

"Good-bye, Mark. When you are in better humor come and see me."

Mark turned and sauntered off.

"That's always the way," continued Louise to her companion. "He resents the least suggestion. Mark never can understand."

"Why will you and Mark always be disputing? It certainly is n't a pleasant thing for either of you, and when all is said, nothing seems to be accomplished."

"What could be accomplished, pray, when he takes it so?"

"I mean you never tell him just what it is you object to. Now, what's the matter with those pictures of his? Are n't they as good as the ones you were raving over of that Pole's?"

"He is a Russian, Kate dear."

"Russian's, then. Are n't they? I like his drawing far better."

"I see. You wish me to be more concrete, and I would, only we have n't time if we go to the Seraha lecture."

"I can't see what you find in that fat Hindoo to go into raptures over. Really, Louise, do you know, yourself?"

"I wish you could see, Mamma Kate, for your own sake. My life is so full of the joy of seeking. But I can't make you see. I must be content with my own happiness in this new light."

"But you are so vague, dear. You don't once say what this new light is. That's just the way you talk to Mark about his pictures."

"You are always wanting to be concrete, when nothing in this world is, don't you know? The soul must reach out for itself and find its own path. Mark ought to do the

same. Just now the rage is for everything foreign. Our land is so new and crude. If people want foreign things, why does n't he paint abroad?"

Louise Parsons' placid way of accepting her own ideas, or those she chose to adopt for the time being, was infectious. She dragged her unresisting little stepmother away to the Seraha lecture without more ado, not even turning her serene face for another glance at the offending pictures which had been skied to make room for those of more successful artists. "You see, Mamma Kate," she said, drawing that little lady toward her with a caressing movement, "I perfectly adore Mark. We know he has talent, but I want to spur him to do something which will make the world see it, too. We can never be happy if he doesn't succeed. You know how it would be — he would never be satisfied with himself, and I — well — I should always feel it also. He must succeed."

"Yes, dear, I suppose he must," Mrs. Parsons sighed. Being childless herself, her love for Mark was akin to a mother's devotion. Her heart overflowed toward her sister's son with tender craving and solicitude. She loved her stepdaughter also, and tried to persuade herself that the beautiful child was all in all to her, but in a woman's heart there is always room for a son, with love and to spare. As time passed she had learned to yield, as an elder sister might, to the girl's caressing domination, even as one who abdicates gladly an arduous position.

Mark strode from the gallery, smothering his anger, not turning to see if they took a second look at his unfortunate pictures. Had he not painted them for Louise? Every brush mark had been placed with thought of her, — his

hours of toil had counted for him only as they would bring return in her eyes, — and what had he gained? A shrug, a cool glance, and a cutting remark; and, worse than all, the maddening thought that she, too, was only one of the crowd whom he was fighting, and would think as they thought, not as he thought.

He went back to his dismantled studio and gazed indignantly about. All his long, eager winter's work, his very soul — as he thought then — laid bare to the public, and left to their careless, uncomprehending glances, or more cruel utter neglect.

"Fools," he muttered, moving about his cold, disordered room. "Fools! Let them pay their price for crushing out every atom of American ambition. What can we do? What can I do?" Biting his lips with anger and chagrin, he jerked an old trunk, which bore the marks of many campaigns, from a corner where its disreputableness had been hidden by an Oriental fabric and began tossing into it a few of his belongings. "I'll get out of this. I'll go where the air, at least, is wholesome," he said.

"Come and see me when you're in better humor." The words rang in his ears. "I'll be in better humor next fall, perhaps," he said grimly, "if not — I'll wait until I am, and she may wait too, or else —," he stopped and laughed unpleasantly, and turning a canvas from the wall, stood looking down at it, his hands thrust deep in his pockets. Then the artist began to dominate the man, and the frown on his face turned into a serious look of contemplation. He knelt before it, scrutinizing every line, and touched it here and there to see if it was dry, whistling softly. If Louise had seen him, would she still have been cold? Was

it her face, or was it his idealized conception of her? He was glad he had not sent it with the others to be slighted and forgotten. What would she have said if he had? He turned it to the wall at last, and went on with his packing.

An hour later he was seated in a local train, his color box and valise strapped together at his feet, speeding out of the city. He had canceled several engagements and written his aunt he would not dine with her that evening. Whither he went he did not care, — anywhere to be away from people. The day had been cold, lowering, and raw. The air had the fishy smell of the sea, yet through it all, and through his misery, he heard the call of the spring. Nature would be more kind, more human than men and women. She would take him to her bosom and steep his soul in the wine of life. Perhaps, sometime, he would be able to work again seriously, but now he must rest, and dream, and meditate.

When a man, starting out in the enthusiasm of youth, has toiled and hoped on into the earnestness of manhood, patiently, perseveringly seeking to maintain his ideals in spite of all that the world offers in exchange therefor, and finds at last he has brought up against a blank wall of indifference, what is he to do but take the antidote for his suffering that nature benignly gives — to lie awhile on her breast, bathe in her streams, listen to her bird songs and the voice of her woods, revivify himself with her pure breezes, and let his soul become once more enlightened by God's sunlight streaming over all? Mark Thorn, vaguely feeling this instinctive longing for the natural cure for his hurt, sought it out, even as a vine trails its length toward its natural support, or a flower seeks the sun.

As the train rumbled on, Mark leaned back in his seat, with his hat pulled over his eyes, and thought of the years he had spent in fitting himself to paint the pictures which had been lost sight of by the throng. Why had he done it? What had urged him on, and held him to his early ideals? He felt the satisfaction of a man who is conscious, in spite of failure, that he has been true to a lofty purpose, and not moved merely by a sordid ambition. He had chosen to be a creator, and a dreamer of dreams; what then, was the world at fault that it refused to worship at his feet? Was that the guerdon for which he worked, after all his high sentiments? It was well, then, that he had failed to reach it. A fillip for the world! If he could only make a living, that was all he asked of it; and he would paint as he pleased, cling to his ideals, create for the love of his art, and be happy. Ah — but there was Louise! Must he win the world to win her love?

He moved restlessly in his seat, and scanned the landscape absently as he whirled by. Now and then he caught a glimpse of the sea, and as the train sped northward, the hills grew higher, and the spring seemed more advanced in the sheltered hollows. Two countrymen in the seat behind him talked of their own and their neighbor's affairs, and he caught scraps of their conversation.

"—— Willoughby Junction ——"

"Yes, pretty good, I should think. Heatherby, he's made extry good hauls this spring, 'nd Boston market's always good."

"Heatherby's always lucky. He's born to it — presume to say 't he fished when he was a baby."

"The' say he still keeps th' boat; well — he'd ought to."

"Woodbury Center's pickin' up a little, too. The' tell me the's a new store there."

"Yes, but 'twon't grow much. Nothin' to make it -- no factories, not even on th' line of the road."

"They might make something out o' their marshlands, if they'd only put a little money into draining of 'em."

The conductor passed, and Mark asked him for the nearest station to Woodbury Center. A place with no railroad to it, and no factories near it, and marshlands and woodlands and sea within reach, that was the place to which he wished to go. "Anywhere," he said to himself, "where civilization had not blundered into improvements."

"Woodbury Center? It's off the line of the road, but I guess you can get there if you try. It's not far from Willoughby Junction."

So Mark had his luggage put off at the Junction, and was left standing on the platform, the only mortal in sight. The clouds had lifted, and the sun shone warmly. He sat on his box and whistled, and whittled a pine stick, and waited. Presently a small boy, with answering whistle, came along trundling a wheelbarrow, and informed him that when people wanted to go to Woodbury Center, his "pa" took them over in his spring wagon, but that "pa" was away now taking a lady and her trunk to the next town. So Mark set out across country on foot, in the direction indicated by the boy, carrying his hand bag and easel, and leaving his heavier luggage in the care of the little humpbacked agent whom he found in the station.

While Mark Thorn was pursuing his way toward Woodbury Center, guided now and then by a passing farmer to

a shorter cut through woodland or meadow, Mary Elizabeth Drew stood in the doorway of her ancient, rambling home, speeding two departing guests with gentle words of courtesy. Her mother spoke also, from the inner room where she reclined in an invalid's chair.

"Don't hurry away, Mrs. Somers; stay and have supper with us."

"Yes, so do," said Mary Elizabeth.

"Oh, my! We can't stay another minute — Ma — you know we're going to have company to tea. Good-bye," said Jane Somers, the tall, loose-jointed daughter, with a hurried flutter, gathering up the back of her skirt, which dragged heavily from her well drawn in waist. "Good-bye."

"Well, good-bye," said her small, wiry, bustling mother, and the two walked quickly away down the garden path, bordered by Elizabeth's spring posies.

Mrs. Drew took a long breath, and closed her eyes, folding her hands in her lap with Quaker quietude.

"They tired thee, mother."

"No — Oh no. Are they gone?"

"They are just untying the horse."

"Thee must go out in the air, daughter. Thy voice sounds weary. Thee needs the air."

"Yes, mother, after a minute. Shall Katy bring thee a cup of tea?"

"No — I will sleep a little."

Mary Elizabeth stood for a moment in the doorway, watching the carriage top sway and dip, as it slowly sank from sight in the descent to the village; then she moved down the flower-bordered path like a queen, while bright

tulips nodded and touched the hem of her gown as she passed. She stooped and lifted a white one the wind had broken, shook it a little to remove the sand from its pure cup, and propped it up with a forked twig, and then stood looking down at it with a troubled expression on her face. On either side of the path tall white lilacs shook their snowy tassels above her head.

"We are hypocrites, the best of us," she said, at last. "We smile and say things we don't mean. Her voice sounded like a wasp buzzing. Why should she talk to me of Joyful Heatherby and Nathanael?" A wave of color swept over her white throat, deepening as it rose to the halo of red gold about her forehead. She pulled a handful of the brittle lilac leaves and crushed them in her fingers, scattering them over the path as she walked on. Then she stood leaning on the little green gate, looking up and down the quiet country road. Not far away a red cow stood sleepily, chewing her cud; and three tall poplars, lank and still, cast slender shadows across the way. In the distance a small figure, laden with a basket and an armful of pink crab-apple blossoms, emerged from the strip of woodland, and climbing a low stone wall, came toward her. The child's slight form leaned and swayed with the weight of the basket, and her straight gown clung to her lithe limbs as she hurried on. As Elizabeth watched her, the look of anxiety in her eyes deepened. "What is she doing out so late, and her grandmother ill?" she thought. "I can't understand why Mrs. Somers thought it necessary to tell me, or what she thought I had to do with it. Nathanael may choose where he pleases — I love the child myself, why should n't he?" Then she swung the gate open and walked down the path.

"Joyful Heatherby, where have you been? Let me take that great basket."

"No — no. It's not heavy. Stoop down so I may kiss you, my arms are so full."

"What have your arms being full to do with kissing me, you dear?"

"I would hug you with them, of course. You haven't been over for so long — grandmother said Mrs. Drew must be having a spell, that you did n't come."

"No, but I would have come surely, if I had known your grandmother was ill."

"She has n't been sick — what made you think so?"

Again the shade passed over Elizabeth's face. Her manner with the child was that of an older sister. "Mrs. Somers told me. I wondered at your leaving her alone in this way."

Joyful laughed, and then suddenly grew grave. "I think Mrs. Somers is a very funny woman. When anything happens you would rather she should not know, she always seems to come round — and — then she seems to know, even if you put her off. I told her — a week ago it was — grandmother had a headache. Grandfather was out with his boat, and you know how grandmother is when he's gone too long — well, Mrs. Somers had to come around asking that very day." The child was like a sad spring fay who had found a trouble in its little life, as she stood there with her arms full of blossoms, gazing up into Elizabeth's face with large, sorrowful eyes. "Would you be afraid that way every time he goes? He comes back all right. He always does, but she sits in her room and makes it dark, and moans and moans, and rocks back and forth, and never eats anything until he comes to her."

"No, I would n't. But don't think about it, dear. You can't help it."

"Sometimes I wish he would sell the old boat, but then, poor grandfather, he would die if he could n't go on the sea once in a while; and anyway, we need the money."

Elizabeth looked at the girl with eyes grown luminously soft and loving. "Yes, dear, I know," she said gently.

The caressing look brought its quick response. "You're my 'Ladye Faire,' and I love you, I love you," Joyful cried. Then she threw her flowers on the ground and knelt beside them, bending over the basket. "Look in here, look. I have fern, and Jacks, and bluebells, and cress — grandmother loves it — and these yellow flowers — they hang their heads as if they were afraid to look up — and this vine — they all grow in deep, deep shade under a great rock over by Blue Marsh Creek. They are for my wild bed in the corner by the porch, where the sun never shines. I can dig there all I wish — grandmother won't care, and I can have it look like spring all the time."

"I'm afraid they won't do well there, child. Everything needs a little sun, you know."

"Oh, well, I can try," said Joyful, brightly. Then, straightening herself, she looked again into Elizabeth's eyes. "Why do you always call me child? I was seventeen last week, and grandmother says I am a woman now, and must 'put away childish things.'"

"I was thinking something of that kind as you came up," said Elizabeth, looking away where the sky blazed with gold.

The girl's face flushed. "I'm almost as tall as you are. My chin comes up to your shoulder."

"Yes, Joy, but do you think you ought to go wandering

away off like this, alone? To Blue Marsh Creek? Why, that's four miles."

"I know, but — grandmother sent me out. She said I looked peaked. Of course she did n't know I was going so far — neither did I."

"I only meant for your own sake, dear. Let me take this heavy basket, and you come in and rest. Then, after I've looked after mother, I'll go part way with you. It will be too late for you to go alone."

"No — no, Ladye Faire. I'm not tired. I met up with Nathanael a long piece back — he was in his father's field that joins the Thorntons; he came across to give me a message for grandfather, and carried it all the way to your piece of woodland. I can't. It's so late now, grandmother will worry."

They had reached the gate, and Elizabeth, turning quickly, opened it. "Good night, then," she said. "Tell Mrs. Heatherby I'll be over in a day or two. Good night."

"Good night, Ladye Faire," called the little maid, hurrying away. The great basket dangled against her, and her gown, torn in one or two places, swung to and fro, as she walked. Her sunbonnet hung by the strings from her neck, and her plentiful brown hair was knotted high on the crown, leaving only a stray lock or two to be blown back by the breeze. Her dress touched the hepaticas and violets growing in the crevices of the stone wall, and set them nodding and gossiping together as she passed.

It was a mile from Mrs. Drew's house to the little inlet of the ocean where Joyful lived. All the distance was covered by primeval forest growth, undevastated by the hand of man since first it came into the possession of the

Drew family, in the early settlement of the country, except where a wagon way had been cut through to what was called Heatherby's Point, which was in reality no point at all, only a sheltered cove, where the tides rolled gently up the sand toward the green woods, and back again, day after day, and where the waves never were high, even in the roughest weather.

This patch of forest, with its dense shadows and many logs, its one purling stream, which she could leap across, its bright sunnyspots, and low hills sloping toward the brook, was as dear to her as the little yellow cottage at the end, with its few acres of cleared land, which was her home. She knew where the first trailing arbutus was to be found in the spring, where the chestnuts lay thickest in the fall, where the flying squirrels had their nests, and the owls their holes — where they sat and made their doleful cries with the whippoorwills in the soft summer evenings. She would have risen at midnight and walked among those trees with as little fear as she would have had in crossing her grandmother's kitchen.

The sun had dropped below the edge of the horizon when she turned from the main road into the lane through the woods, lightly treading the soft grass. Suddenly a pleasant voice arrested her hurried steps.

"Will you kindly tell me how far I am from Woodbury Center?"

Glancing quickly in the direction from which the voice came, her eyes met those of a stranger, who stood regarding her intently, as he had been for some moments, unknown to her.

"It's about two miles, I think," she replied, and would

have moved on, when he spoke again, a little wearily, glancing at some traps by his side — a gun, a contrivance combining camp stool, umbrella, and easel in one slightly cumbrous affair, and a small valise and color box strapped together.

"I beg pardon for detaining you, but I fear I've lost my bearings. Which way must I go — the shortest way — to reach the village?" He gathered up his belongings as he spoke, and crossed the wagon track toward her.

She put her basket down, and pointing with her shapely little sunburned hand, said simply, "Turn to the right when you reach the main road;" then, noting his evident weariness, added, "You'll have quite a hill to climb, but only for a short distance — then it's downhill all the way."

"Thank you, thank you." He made no move to pass on, but placed his traps beside her basket. "I have a load to carry also, only mine is not beautiful as yours." He threw his hat, which he had not replaced since he first saw her, on the ground, and seating himself at the foot of a great chestnut, began mopping his brow with his handkerchief. "I think if I've a hill to climb I'll rest here a little first," he said.

Joyful, with a reserved half smile, took up her basket and walked on, wondering somewhat concerning him, but simply unconscious of the intent gaze which followed her.

He leaned back against the rough tree, whistling softly to himself, as he watched, with half-closed eyes, the little figure growing smaller in the distance. Suddenly his face lighted, and springing to his feet, as if weariness were unknown to him, he bounded after her with all the energy of youth and enthusiasm.

"Would it be asking too much —?" She started, and

looked up, as if he had already passed from her thoughts. "I beg pardon again, but one sees so few whom one can ask," and he looked ruefully up and down the quiet lane, as if he had expected it to be thronged with the moving crowd to which he was accustomed. "I thought possibly you might know of some one who could take me in for a few days. I don't care to go even to Woodbury, if I can stop outside. I wish to make a few sketches about the country."

He bent, and mechanically took hold of the handle of her basket. She did not yield it to him, but he bore the greater part of its weight as he suited his step to hers.

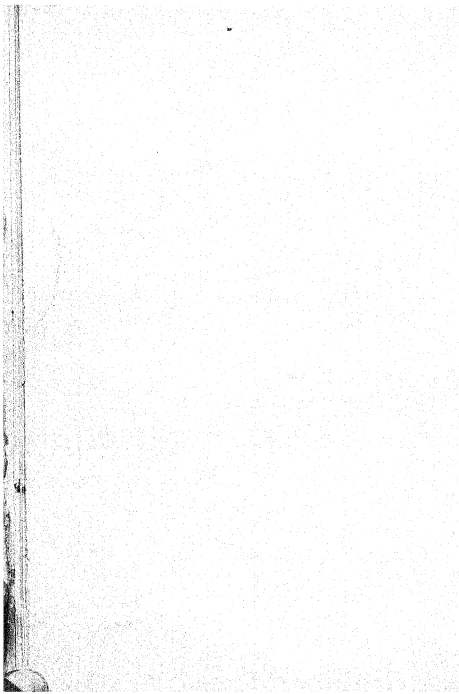
"Indeed, you're welcome to ask me, but I don't know of any one; there are no houses nearer than the village after you pass the one on the hill, — that's where Mrs. Drew lives. She's an invalid, and I never knew them to take any one. Mrs. Somers in the village takes boarders from the city every summer, but —" she looked up, and again their eyes met. She was thinking perhaps she ought to offer him the hospitality of her grandfather's house, but what would her grandmother say if she brought a guest in, unannounced, after the supper things were all cleared away? She wavered, and glanced up again, and the flush on her cheeks took a deeper hue. "I don't know what — perhaps grandmother might —"

"Ah, if she would —!" but with quick intuition he guessed at her embarrassment, and hastened to relieve it.

"No, no, I wouldn't intrude for a moment. I only thought you might possibly direct me to some one who's in the habit of taking in poor stragglers. I've carried those traps as far as I care to, for one day, but I'll take them up and plod on to Woodbury."



He was rewarded by another glimpse of her face. *Page 17.*



"Oh," she cried, glad to compromise with herself, "you can leave them at grandfather's. It's only a little way farther. I'll wait here till you fetch them."

"I'll be delighted." He hastened back for them, but when he returned, found to his chagrin, that her face was totally eclipsed. A little womanly feeling of reserve had caused her to draw the great sunbonnet over her head. He was vexed as he looked down from his greater height on the slight, swaying figure beside him. She moved on with long, easy steps, keeping pace with him so naturally that he scarcely altered his gait for her. Then, noticing the evident weight of the basket, and the slenderness of the hand that clung to it, he cleverly shifted his easel, placing it under the arm that carried his valise, and again relieved her of over half the burden. He was rewarded by another glimpse of her face, and a smile, that his man's heart answered with a quicker beat.

"You have your hands full without this," she said, making a movement of resistance to which he paid no heed, but retained his grasp, as a man will, and strode on, thinking of what use a study of her head might be.

"We can't find such models in town — might as well study flowers from a milliner's window. She carries herself like a princess. I must say something — she won't make advances. Wonder how old she is? I'd give a dollar to pull off that ugly bonnet."

But no. The full crown had slipped over her high knot of hair, and the stiff pasteboard front, drooping forward, hid her face, neck, and even her shoulders. So they walked on in silence, while he strove to analyze the impression her beauty had made on him. "It might be her eyes, or her

color, but they are not all. No, it's her completeness. She is unique and perfect in this torn gown, with her arms full of crab-apple blossoms. I'll paint her like this, and call the picture 'Sylvia,' or something — but I have n't a doubt her name is Faith, or Patience, or Prudence. Well, they're not bad — but —”

“There's grandfather's now. You see it was n't far.”

“Indeed, no.” Roused from his reverie, Mark noticed a story-and-a-half house, set with its side toward the road, surrounded by a tangle of shrubbery. A tall locust, tardy in its foliage, and a giant silver-leaf poplar, with great twisted branches, made the house seem even smaller than it was. He walked more slowly, dismayed to find their destination so near, and no steps taken to insure a further acquaintance. Unused either to embarrassment or fatigue, Mark was now feeling a measure of both. Taken out of his own environment, and placed in hers, he felt himself in a sense an intruder.

“I ought to tell you my name,” he began hurriedly. “It is Thorn — Mark Thorn. It's very good of you to ask me to bring my things here. They're not easily carried a long distance.”

“My name is Joyful,” she said, with simple directness, “Joyful Antoinette Heatherby. Grandmother will be glad to take care of these for you.”

He gave her a searching look as she spoke her name, as though he half suspected her of reading his thoughts, but the sheltering sunbonnet screened her well: only, as he turned to open the gate, he caught a glimpse of a demure mouth, and delicately rounded chin, and a cheek flushed with exercise. A plump old lady, in lilac-colored gown

and round linen collar, stood in the doorway, eying them sharply as they walked up the path together.

"This is Mr. Thorn, grandmother. I asked him to bring his things here, instead of carrying them all the way to Woodbury to-night."

Joyful went up the steps a little wearily, untying her bonnet as she spoke. She pulled it carelessly off, and the knot of brown hair was loosened, and fell in heavy waves, swinging far below her waist. She gave her head a toss, as if its freedom were a relief, and passed quickly in, leaving Mark to make his own explanation of their chance meeting. As he talked with Mrs. Heatherby without, satisfying her pardonable curiosity, he caught glimpses of the girl within, as she coiled her hair, standing before a little mirror he could not see. She disappeared into a low summer kitchen, and returned, bearing in her hands a large blue pitcher dripping with water. He watched the deft movements of her wrists as she wiped it and placed it on an old-fashioned table standing with its leaves down, against the wall, and covered with a gray linen cloth. She thrust the branches of pink bloom deep into the pitcher, and then walked backward, with her head on one side, regarding them. "She is unconsciously artistic," he said to himself. Again she disappeared into the kitchen, from whence came presently the light, clinking sound of dishes.

Mark was seized with a wild desire to remain, but began slowly to unstrap his color box from his valise. "I hope these things will not be in your way—" he said, "they certainly were in mine." Taking up his hat he straightened his somewhat angular figure to its full height, and looked away over the bay, quivering in the glow of evening light,

and then at the woods growing somber in the gathering dusk. "This is all very beautiful," he said.

He was hoping Joyful would return, that he might bid her good night, while Mrs. Heatherby was revolving in her mind the propriety of inviting him to stop until morning. Cautious and thrifty she was, yet hospitable withal, and something in his manner had already won her. "I suppose he's used to having things just so," she thought. "City bred folks mostly are, 'nd I don't know 's I better, he being a perfect stranger, so, but then 't would n't be anything more 'n doing 's I'd be done by."

He turned with a sudden movement. "Good evening, and many thanks to you," he said.

"I was just thinking if we only had things anyway 's you 're most likely accustomed to, I'd ask you to stop over, long's you 're looking a little fagged, 'nd it 's a good piece on to Woodbury, 'nd more 'n half the way uphill; but we live very plainly, 'nd have things plain, 'nd you 'd likely not be comfortable, long 's you 're used to having things just so."

"I'm used to having things any way I can get them, and thankful enough to have things at all," he said, with a laugh. "But I should be sorry to put you to trouble, if —" he was going to ask if he might pay for his lodging, but knowing the pride of many a New England housekeeper would rise affronted at such a reception of proffered hospitality, he added, "if you will allow me to take things just as you have them, I will accept your kindness gladly — but — I may be a beggarly tramp, you know."

She laughed a wholesome, hearty laugh. "There 's a long step between a gentleman 'nd a tramp, 'nd I 've told

them apart before now; so 'f you're not afraid of being taken for one, we 'll risk it. Now you walk right in, 'nd take a seat. Heatherby, he 's milkin', but it 's time he was through. He 'll be in in a minute, 'nd take those things of yours."

They entered a large, low-ceiled room, and she moved forward an old-fashioned rocker, with patchwork-covered cushion. Mark leaned his head against its broad, flaring back with a delicious sense of rest, glad that he was in his own land, and not in some places where his nomadic life had taken him; and this satisfaction increased when Joyful entered, bringing a plate of little scalloped cakes and a glass of milk.

"I thought you might like this before you go," she said.

"He 's not going. I asked him to stay overnight," said her grandmother, bustling about and lighting candles, with a step light and quick for one so heavy. "You put up the leaf, Joy, 'nd I 'll make tea. I wonder what 's keepin' father?"

"No, no. You must n't make tea, Mrs. Heatherby, indeed you must not. This is all I wish," he said, taking the plate from Joyful's hands. "This milk is a treat to me. You were very kind to think of bringing it," he added, turning to Joyful.

"Oh, no. We always have cakes and milk, and walking makes one hungry." She raised the leaf of the table, and shook out a clean, white cloth to lay on it.

"I 'd about given you up, Joy," said the old lady, moving briskly about, now in and now out of the summer kitchen. "When I saw the sun goin' down I says to father 't I guessed we 'd better have supper, for more 'n likely you were stoppin' over to Widow Drew's, long 's you did n't come.

"Oh, my plants!" The child darted out like a bird and returned with her hands full of green stuff. "See, grandmother, the stream bed was full of cress. And these ferns and things! I've been over to Blue Marsh Creek and got all these to fill the bare place by the porch."

"Why, child alive!" exclaimed Mrs. Heatherby, standing still in astonishment, with a plate of bread in one hand, and a generous brown teapot in the other. "You don't mean to tell me 't you've been all the way to Blue Marsh 'nd back this blessed afternoon, luggin' that great basket. Go right 'nd sit down."

Joyful laughed merrily. "I'm going to, grandmother, I'm so hungry," and she disappeared in the kitchen.

"There's no telling what that child 'll do next." Her grandmother poured out a cup of tea. She had arranged a tempting little lunch, in spite of Thorn's remonstrance. "Now, you draw right up 'nd help yourself. 'Tain't much, but if you've been trampin' through the woods 'nd standing round drawing pictures, a cup o' tea 'll be better 'n nothing."

Mark Thorn was feeling the reaction from a day of activity to which he had been long unused, and the fragrance of the tea was more grateful to him than the odors of roses and violets. He was touched by her simple kindness. "I don't know how to thank you, Mrs. Heatherby," he said, drawing up his chair; "your bread and butter are fit for a king, and no one but my mother ever made me such a cup of tea as this."

"Well, that's sayin' a good deal for the tea. I know what boys mostly think of things their mothers make," she replied, beaming with pleasure. Then she left him to

the enjoyment of his meal, and joined Joyful in the kitchen. He could not help hearing the most of their conversation.

"Why, I've been farther than that a great many times, grandmother, and besides, I met up with Nathanael, and he carried it over half way for me, and, grandmother, he says Jack's written at last, and is coming home. He may be here any day."

"Well, you need n't be so tickled over that. Jack's very little account accordin' to my way of thinkin'. Any boy 't would run away from his study 'nd good chances 't his brother worked hard to give him, 'nd keep his folks in hot water for months 'nd never send any word, nor ask forgiveness, nor show any contrition of spirit, nor —"

"But, grandmother, — he went — I know why, and I'll tell you. He did n't want to be sent to college at Nathanael's expense, and his father was set on his going, and he always has put Jack first, and Nathanael likes study, and Jack does n't, and they had words about it, and Mr. Stoddard got so angry, and told Jack he was ungrateful and lazy, and so Jack said why did n't he send Nathanael, and his father said he knew well enough they could n't send both, and then Jack spoke up and said he would n't stand in Nathanael's way any longer, so he went off, and I think it was noble in him."

"Hump! Guess if he'd cared to go himself he would n't 'a' been so dreadful noble. How'd you come to know so much 'nd all about it?"

"Nathanael told me a little to-day, and Jack told me part before he left."

"Humph! Now eat your supper, child. Did you see Jack before he went, then?" These questions were put in rather a sharp tone, and Joyful's low replies were lost.

"Ah! So there is a Jack," thought Mark. "And who might Nathanael be? And a little idyllic shepherd and shepherdess affair going on, and the course of true love not running smoothly, as usual." There was silence for a while, and the only sound was the rattling of milk pans. Then a heavy step and a hearty voice broke the stillness.

"Why, bless me, Joy! Back, are you? We thought you were stoppin' over to Widow Drew's."

"No, grand-daddy, I was afraid you'd worry."

"Well, if you had n't come 'long pretty soon, ye'd 'a' seen me a humpin' after ye, that's certain."

"She's been over to Blue Marsh 'nd back, trampin' the country 'nd tearin' her clo'es — but there, never mind, Joy. I guess it's all right, 'nd does you good; more 'n likely it keeps you from bein' weakly like other girls." Then followed a low explanation about himself, which Mark did not hear, and a moment later the kitchen door swung open, and a tall old man, heavy browed, but kindly in expression, stood looking down on him.

"Keep ye'r seat, keep ye'r seat," he said, as Mark rose. "Well, well. They tell me ye're stranded, so to speak."

"Why, not exactly stranded — I've been on a bit of a cruise, and have just cast anchor here for the night, and to take in supplies." Mark glanced toward the table from which he had risen.

"You just sit still 'nd keep on loadin' up. You've struck the right place for that. Marthy knows what's what. Marthy, where are those things I'm to bear aloft?"

"They're on the porch yet. Now, Mr. Thorn, you sit still 'nd rest — or perhaps you'd rather go to your room."

Joyful had just passed out, and was seated on the upper

step of the little piazza, her hands clasped about one knee, and her head thrown back against the railing, listening to the whippoorwills, and watching the wheeling swallows overhead.

"It's too charming to go into any room such an evening as this. If I shall not be intruding, may I sit here with you a while? Oh, leave those things, Mr. Heatherby. I'll take them up later. Draw your chair out here, and we'll chat a while, if you don't mind. Mrs. Heatherby, let me take that. Where shall I put it — here?" He placed the great rocker she brought out near Joyful. "No, no. You take it. I'll sit here with you, if I may, Miss Heatherby."

He sat on the opposite end of the step, and Joyful opened her large eyes and looked into his with grave dignity. She had been called Miss Heatherby for the first time in her life. Then she smiled assent to his question, and looked away into the gathering shadows, but did not speak. Again Mark's readiness of speech left him, and he fell to wondering about this flower of the wilderness.

Mrs. Heatherby, in the rocker, swayed quietly to and fro. "I guess I won't light up indoors 'f we're goin' to sit here; it only draws millers," she said. Her goodman had taken the light and disappeared with it in the kitchen. They sat silent then, while the dark woods grew darker, and the stars twinkled out one by one, and the swallows circled above them, and the whippoorwills insisted on Will's being whipped, and the sound of the surf was heard away over beyond the point that separated their little bay from the great restless ocean. It was a moment of restful peace in Mark's life that he never afterward forgot. Presently the grandfather joined them, coming around the house from

the rear, with his pipe in his hand. He tossed something into the little maid's lap. She took it up and held it to her face. It was a tuft of purple, lilac-like bloom.

"What're ye all keepin' so still about?" he said.

Joyful smelled her lilacs, but said nothing. He seated himself at her feet, and she ran her fingers through his thin, silvery locks. There seemed to be a tacit understanding between them.

"I opine you're a pretty tired little girl to-night," he said.

"I guess we're all ready to rest a spell," said Mrs. Heatherby.

"We're listening, grand-daddy. I love to listen in the evenings, and smell the lilacs."

"So do I. The time of the lilacs is the sweetest time of the year," said Mark.

"If you like them, too, you may have half of mine." She broke her spray and handed him a part. Again she looked frankly in his face. In the dusk he felt, rather than saw the gaze, and it pleased him. "She has the good sense and openness of innocence," he thought. In after years the odor of lilacs always brought to him the feeling of that twilight, and the girl with her hand on her grandfather's hair, the swaying rocker, the darkening woods, the far-off sea, and the watching stars overhead.

The old man led Mark into conversation, and they chatted long, while Joyful listened and dreamed; and that night when she laid her head on her pillow, she thought how she had been called "Miss Heatherby," and that now indeed she was become a woman, and must "put away childish things."

Then her thoughts wandered to the talk of the stranger

with her grandfather, of the lands where he had been; and the world seemed to have grown suddenly larger to her since she had said good-bye to Elizabeth, and turned into the wagon way through the woods. To be sure, she had talked with Elizabeth and her mother of the cities where they had been, and she had read books, and many of them — for there was a whole closet full of them in the upper hall, which had belonged to her mother's father — but with all this, the world outside the village and their own little cove had always seemed to her a sort of dream world, vague and far away. To-night it had suddenly become very real.

This stranger had come to them from out of it all — from somewhere — from almost everywhere, it seemed, bringing with him the atmosphere of some other environment. He was not like Nathanael, he was not like Jack. He was absolutely different, in many subtle, undefinable ways, — she scarcely understood wherein they all lay. Could Mark have looked into the girl's mind he would not have wondered at the grave, searching gaze that met his own at intervals, as if looking into his very soul.

She was to him a "rara avis," to be examined, classified, labeled, and placed among his character studies. To her he was a new creature, come from a world heretofore peopled with dream folk. With childlike simplicity she took note of all his ways, the tones of his voice, its every inflection, and all his small, unconscious courtesies. With unerring instinct he was being weighed in the balance, unknown to himself.

CHAPTER II

A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING

"She heard with patience all unto the end ;
And strove to master sorrowfull assay,
Which greater grew, the more she did contend,
And almost rent her tender heart in tway ;
And love fresh coles unto her fire did lay :
For greater love the greater is the loss.
Was never lady loved dearer day
Then she did love the Knight of the Redcrosse ;
For whose dear sake so many troubles did her toss."

— *The Faerie Queene.*

ELIZABETH loved her flowers. Those who knew her well, always knew when they might find her in her garden. This morning she stooped over a bed of forget-me-nots in a damp corner near the garden wall, where lilies of the valley grew thickly among the tender blue flowers. A huge spruce tree, with spreading branches, kept the spot always shaded, and some hidden spring kept it always damp. Close to the wall, delicate ferns unrolled themselves and flourished in the rich leaf mold Elizabeth had placed there for their own particular pleasure.

It was still early. The sun had but just removed his cloud cap, and was yawning over the sea, taking his first peep at New England, and winking at the thrifty people already setting out on their day's labor. Elizabeth held a small trowel in her hand, with which she prodded among

the roots. Presently she straightened herself, lifting a long trailing piece of chickweed, and tossed it out on the walk behind her with an emphatic "There!" Looking up she saw a pleasant pair of blue eyes, and a smiling face above the wall.

"Why, Nathanael! I had no idea any one would be along at this hour," she cried, half reproachfully, glancing down at her tucked-up skirts, and putting back a wisp of radiant hair with her wrist, which her fingers were too covered with soil to touch.

"No? Haven't I as much right to be here at this hour as you? That's a great good morning." He laughed, and then they both laughed. He placed his hands on the top of the wall, and leaped to a seat on its broad surface.

"I suppose you have, as long as you stay on the other side of the wall." She felt a flush mounting to her face, as it had the evening before, when she bent over her tulips, and stooping, she dug her trowel deep among the plants.

"You'll uproot all those, if you dig among them in that way; now look what you've done." She pulled up a spray covered with tiny blue blossoms. "Don't throw it away — give it to me." She tossed it across the intervening space, and he began arranging the flowers in a cluster. "Give me a few of those lilies of the valley to go with them," he begged, and she did so. "Now, that's something like." He surveyed his bouquet critically. "Tell you what — if I went at my farming as you go at your gardening, I would n't have a hill of potatoes left."

"This is n't the way I garden. I'm vexed because of that teasing chickweed — and — why did you come here and catch me looking like this?"

"I beg your pardon. I was just thinking you never looked better."

She laughed. "Thank you for the compliment."

He placed his hoe against a stone in the foot of the wall, and with a bound landed on the path at her side. "I came hoping I should find you here. I've a letter from my brother, at last."

She became grave at once. "Come to the piazza where we can talk without standing in the wet," she said. "Wait a moment until I wash this earth from my hands."

There, seated on the low piazza steps, Nathanael read her portions of his brother's letter. "You see how things stand," he said, at last.

"Yes. I suppose his college career is ended."

"I suppose so."

"Now, Nathanael, listen to me." Elizabeth leaned forward, and looked earnestly at him. "Do you think it right that you should sacrifice yourself any longer for Jack?"

"Oh, it is n't that. I have n't sacrificed myself, as you call it — you see — there's father — but then it is n't that, either."

"Well," she said at last, impatiently, "you prepared yourself, and worked hard for the money, and then what did you do? You dropped everything and spent the money on a boy who had n't the grace to appreciate it. Now he leaves you in the lurch, with all the spring planting, and does n't stick to college, either. You have a right, a God-given right, to take what he throws away. If your mother were living she would absolve you from all promises, and say go."

"What thee says is right, Elizabeth." It was the little mother who spoke from her chair by the window, where the

lace curtains floated about her. She was knitting from a pile of white wool in her lap.

"A man would seem a fool not to take your advice, and yet — father has always depended on having one of us with him, and a fellow of Jack's spirit finds it pretty hard. He learns easily. If he would only persevere, he might be somebody."

"I would rather have your strength of purpose than his cleverness to 'make somebody,' as you call it, of a man," said Elizabeth.

"Do you think you are quite fair to my brother?"

She drew her brows together for a moment in thought. "Yes, I believe I am. He knows he is clever as well as you do; and he ought to know the value of a college education. But what has he done? Thrown up his chances, and gone off with that Captain Tobit, just to gratify a spirit of adventure. It really seems an ignoble part he is playing."

"He hasn't gone yet. He's to spend a week at home first."

"But he's not been in college since Christmas. Do you know what his companionships were there?"

"No — well — he was a little reckless, but I've heard nothing bad about him. I was told that he said he 'gave up and cleared out, because he wished me to have his chance.' You see that makes my course a difficult one."

"May I ask who told you that?"

"Certainly — it was Joyful Heatherby. Why?"

"Because we had been told something so very different. It was a friend of mother's who spoke of it, — a member of the Harvard Faculty, so it must be correct. We had not meant to tell you, but now I think it is better we should.

He said Jack was suspended, and went off with this captain, in the first place, because he did not wish it to be known at home." Nathanael said nothing, but turned his little bunch of flowers about in his hands, thoughtfully. "We know, of course, there are two sides to it, but you came for my opinion, and here it is. Since Jack has taken this step, my mind is very clear. You have always lived for him and your father — now, live for yourself awhile."

Nathanael gave a short laugh. "Your advice falls so in line with my inclination that it blinds me. I mean it makes it hard for me to see the exact rights in the case."

"It is the exact right, Nathanael, do believe me. But —" She was wondering how Joyful Heatherby came to know so much about Jack's doings, and how she came to tell Nathanael.

"It is easy to do things for others — easier than for one's self alone. I owe a duty to father, but if I had the right —" He looked at her and paused. His blue eyes shone with a beautiful light from within. If she had only seen it — but her eyes were fixed on the bed of tulips — she would have understood. He wanted to say: "If I had the right to do it for you," but at present he had earned no such right, so he ended lamely, "If there were some one else besides father and Jack to whom I owed allegiance, for whom I should live, I could decide in a moment."

But she, not looking into those love-lighted eyes, and seeing only the bed of tulips, was thinking of Joyful, while he — stupid fellow — did he not know that love must come as a free gift, and can never be claimed as a right? This Elizabeth could have told him, had he only asked her. How could she know it was for her when she was thinking

of Joyful? In her heart she said: "He wants to speak to me about Joyful, and is ashamed." So she answered coldly, but conscientiously gave him the opportunity.

"Joyful Heatherby stopped here a moment, last evening. She said she had seen you — that you had carried her basket for her." He looked up in surprise at the apparent irrelevancy, but she went on, severely anxious to do the right thing. "Was it then she told you what Jack had said?"

"Yes. You see, that puts his act in a different light. We should do the boy justice, Elizabeth. It no longer seems ungrateful, but noble."

"Was it grateful or noble for him to keep reckless companionships, and be turned out of college?"

"He has retrieved himself now, don't you think?"

"Wait and see, Nathanael." She spoke his name with almost a caress in her voice, of which she was unaware, but the tone quivered among his heartstrings.

"Yes, I'll wait. You are good to take this interest; it helps me." Then, as they both sat silent in the morning sun, under the vine-covered porch, Mark Thorn passed by. He had started early, thinking to do a little work by the way — as warm, sunny days in a New England spring are none too frequent — but he had been dreaming along and had really forgotten to look for a subject.

"I can't help wondering how your brother came to tell Joyful about his affairs," said Elizabeth, at length.

"That is one of the things that troubles me most in the matter. I think he cares for the child. I wished to tell you of it, but hardly liked to."

"Why?" Elizabeth spoke sharply, but the pain in her heart was sharp.

"She is such a child, for one thing, and Jack is n't — I can't talk about it now. Perhaps I'm mistaken." Poor fellow! He felt Jack had no right to entangle the girl in his uncertain career, and wished Elizabeth to help protect her, yet did not like to speak against his brother. He loved Elizabeth so deeply and tenderly, he could not think her oblivious of the fact. It seemed to him that his love cried aloud to her in all he said, and most of all when he was silent; and so he stumbled along in his goodness, trying to be loyal to his brother, and blindly driving the knife deeper into her soul and his own, and widening the space between them.

"Surely he loves Joyful," she said, in her heart. "He can't speak of it."

As Mark Thorn passed them, in one keen glance he took note of the situation. "This must be the little maid's Elizabeth Drew, and the other must be that Nathanael. He can't be Jack — not the right type." He lifted his hat as he glanced up, but they both gazed dreamily past him. "If I were in the South, and these were young Southerners, they would have given me a pleasant word," he thought.

After a moment they were startled from their reverie by a cheery, "Good morning." The young artist had turned back, and was leaning over the gate, hat in hand, looking at them across the beds of tulips. "Can you direct me to the house of Mrs. Somers, who takes boarders in the village?"

"I'm going that way; I'll show you." Nathanael slowly lifted his tall form from the step, and took up his hoe. He gave Elizabeth his hand, and looked straight into her eyes for an instant. His eyes were windows to his soul. Alas that there should have been a veil drawn before hers, as she

returned the look. "How beautiful it makes him to love Joyful!" she thought. "Good-bye," she said.

"Will you come to choir practice this evening? Joyful said she would be there." Oh, foolish Nathanael!

"I — can't say. I fear not," she said, turning away. As he climbed the hill, walking beside Mark Thorn, she turned again, and looked after him. "Behold a Man in whom there is no guile," she said in her heart. Then she went to her room and sat looking out of the window, yet seeing nothing, for a long time. Presently a single tear dropped on her folded hands. "How utterly absurd of me!" she said, wiping it hastily away. Then she rose and bathed her face, and re-dressed her glorious hair.

She stood before the glass, and combed and brushed the beautiful red-gold waves clustering about her delicate ears and over her broad, low brow, and she never saw that she was beautiful. She was too busy considering her duty. She must hide this even from herself, and love Joyful as she had always done, and help her to become a fit wife for such a man. Even her mother must never guess her secret. To this end she spent an hour doing light tasks about the house before she reappeared, and at last came down with her arms full of summer dresses and skirts of her own.

"What ails thee, Elizabeth? Thee looks pale," said Mrs. Drew, gently.

"Nothing ails me, mother," she laughed. "I shan't let Mrs. Somers come to see thee any more, if she tells thee I look peaked, as she did last night. Thee knows she always makes mountains out of molehills. Thee remembers she said last evening that Mrs. Heatherby was ill? But Joyful told me it was a week ago, and only for one day."

"Mrs. Somers hath little wit, though a ready tongue. But she means well."

Elizabeth spread out before her mother a silken-lined India muslin dress, daintily trimmed with shirred ribbon and lace. "Look at this, mother. Whatever can I do with it? I wore it two winters ago, at dances and dinners, and it's all out of date, and too pretty to throw aside. I believe I'll make it over for Joyful; and this, too." She took a pink dimity from the heap, and gave it a shake. "Would n't Joy look like an apple blossom in this? How absurd for me, with my red hair, to wear pink! But I did it, and didn't know but it was all right. Thee never told me, mother. Thee kept to thy drab — with a bit of real lace — for thee has a little vanity of thy own, thee knows — but as long as I never forgot to use the plain language to thee, thee let me wear all kinds of colors with my red hair." Elizabeth rearranged her mother's lace cap and silvery hair, and kissed her.

"Thee is thy father's own daughter, Elizabeth, and though he was no Friend, a Godly man was thy father. He won me from a strict Friends' home, but we agreed that we would neither interfere with the faith of the other, and we were always happy, thy father and I. I went more often with him to the read prayers and services of his church, but he did not neglect to go at times with me to our simple worship, and it is my belief that he often came away refreshed in spirit. He hath gone before, and waits my coming now."

The dear old lady sat with white hands folded over her white wool knitting, looking as if she saw him waiting. Her physical frailty made her seem older than she was, and she looked so spirit-like that Elizabeth lived in constant dread

lest she become spirit altogether. Her love for her mother was a passionate adoration, that seemed to cast a halo about both their lives.

"Thee mustn't think of going. Thee is all I have, mother." She spoke frantically.

Her mother replied with a quiet smile. "Nay, daughter, I have no desire to leave thee. I will stay as long as the Lord will let me."

"Mother, what does thee think of making these over for Joy? Look at them."

"I fear thee 'll put worldly ideas in the child's head, if thee dresses her in these."

Elizabeth laughed. "They did n't put worldly ideas in my head, mother. Thee always loved to see me in pretty dresses, thee knows."

"Thy station was different. Joyful lives in the woods, and her grandfather is a fisherman, with little to spare for her, should he die. Where could she wear clothes like these?"

"To church, and afternoon, with me. I'll take off the ribbon and lace, and make them very simply." Elizabeth's heroic nature was bent on making her self-abnegation generously. Joyful should grow wiser and more beautiful under her guardianship. This would she do for Nathanael. And he, as he walked on at Mark Thorn's side, swinging his hoe in one hand, and carrying Elizabeth's flowers in the other, was thinking only of her as the star toward which he had set his hopes, to be his, if ever he might reach so high.

As Nathanael replied to his few questions, Mark could see that his thoughts were elsewhere. He felt some contrition

for having broken up so charming a tableau, but now that it was done, he would study the man a little. To be sure, he might choose to leave this place next day, and never see him again, but what of that? Mark never saw the being yet who did not interest him. The fact helped to make his itineracy possible.

"Don't let me take you out of your way," he said. "I would n't have troubled you, but I'm a total stranger here."

"No trouble, no trouble. I was going this way myself."

"You don't often have weather like this in May?"

"Not often, no."

"Rather awkward, having no railway station nearer than Willoughby Junction." Mark shifted his load a little.

"Yes, yes it is," said Nathanael, waking up again. "The place is pleasanter without it, though."

"I agree with you. Pity the one item of transportation should involve so much that is disagreeable — spoil so much country — make so much noise and dirt."

"Yes, yes, I suppose so. The roads open up the country, though."

"Certainly — still, a man in my line of work doesn't appreciate the need of having the country opened up. It mostly spoils it — it ceases to be primitive, and becomes commonplace — and commonplaceness, you know, with us, is a sort of crime."

Nathanael then, for the first time, took notice of his companion. "We turn here," he said. "You are an artist, I see. Let me assist you."

"No, no. I should feel lost without these traps of mine. I've tramped among the lakes of Maine for hundreds of miles with them."

"Ever been in this section before?"

"Not in this immediate neighborhood, no. I heard a couple talking on the train of Woodbury Center, and something about a marsh. I knew the sea was within easy reach, and the combination tempted me. Acting on impulse, I had my luggage put off at Willoughby Junction, and then learned my only way of getting here was to tramp it."

"All the way from the Junction this morning? You must have gotten an early start."

"No. I stopped overnight about a mile back."

"At Heatherby's cove?" said Nathanael, with a touch of surprise.

"Yes." Mark noted the tone, and preferring not to go into detail, continued, "They told me of Mrs. Somers' place. What kind of a house does she keep? Do you know?"

"Very good, I am told. She — Do you stay long?"

"I can't say. I'm a sort of an itinerant all summer. Where the occasion demands, or the mood takes me, I go and gather material. My real work is done in the studio, in winter. But you interrupted yourself. This Mrs. Somers — is she —"

"Oh, it won't take long for you to see what she is — a busy, overworked, overtalkative little woman; but she means well."

Mark laughed. "Thank you. I see. Did you ever notice it's the well-meaning people in this world who do half the mischief that is done in it?"

Nathanael smiled, and gave Mark a keen, blue flash of a glance. "You've been about the world a good deal, I judge."

"I'm a species of tramp. They're of all castes, you know."

"There's Mrs. Somers' place just ahead. That's her husband pottering around in front."

"Oh, there's a Mr. Somers, is there?"

"Yes. I'll leave you to his tender mercies."

"Thank you greatly for your kindness. I hope, if I stay any length of time, I may have the pleasure of meeting you again. Thorn is my name, Mark Thorn."

"Thank you. My name is Stoddard. I should be glad to have you call, but I'm usually off in the fields somewhere. Our farm is pretty well scattered. We live a lonely life, my father and I and an old Irish housekeeper. I'm more at home in a potato patch or a cornfield than anywhere else, I'm afraid." He spoke sadly, but with a laugh, and turned away. Mark cast a kindly glance after him. He found him decidedly interesting.

CHAPTER III

HEATHERBY'S BOY

Deeper than scorn and swifter than sorrow,—
Higher than stars and freer than winds;
Love flies beyond in the golden to-morrow,—
Trailing his chains, each mortal he binds;
No sea so wide that Love may not follow,—
Peasant or king he blesses and blinds;
Strong as the sunbeams and light as the swallow,—
Sweet the enslavement of all whom he finds.

THE rambling house which Nathanael pointed out to Mark was built with its side close to the street, bringing its closed, green window blinds quite within reach of passers-by. At the end, some three feet lower than the street, was an old orchard, where the grass grew long and thick. A few rosebushes grew about the edges of this sunken square, and near the house a hammock swung between two apple trees. In the hammock sat Jane Somers, sewing, and a large-nosed young man stood leaning against a tree near by, watching her. They had been talking about Nathanael as they saw him advancing down the street, and Jane chose not to see the stranger now stopping at the gate. She did not wish her chat broken in upon, and at any rate "Pa was there — he could see what was wanted," so she sewed on. Mark heard the words, "walking with Joy Heatherby yesterday," and guessed of what she was speaking. The

young man mumbled something in nasal tones, and Jane laughed shrilly.

"Pa" conducted Mark in, and he heard no more. "Pa" was very tall, stoop shouldered, large eyed and thin, with slow, hesitating manner of speech.

"Ma must be somewhere about." He "would go and find Ma."

Mark looked about the room. Two things were so prominent that all else inside its four walls seemed to fade out of existence. These two were the carpet and the piano. The blinds had been tightly closed to keep the sun from fading the former, unfortunately, Mark thought, for it would take several years of continual fading to make it enduring. The piano was too uncompromisingly new, hard, and polished for any fading process to soften its ostentatious presence. It grinned at Mark with its ivory keys, like a row of false teeth. On its great shiny lid was a sheet of music called "Affection's Offering," presented to Jane by the large-nosed young man. At least that was Mark's thought as he sat there waiting for "Ma."

"This is an idyllic sort of place," he commented. "First comes quaint little Joyful and a yet-to-be-seen Jack; then Elizabeth and Nathanael, and here a young couple lounging in the orchard, and 'Affection's Offering' reposing on the piano."

"Ma" had been frying doughnuts in the kitchen. She bustled in, perspiring at every wrinkle, and the odor of frying fat which bustled in with her seemed decidedly incongruous in that violently neat room. As Mark was conducted upstairs and through the hall, the whole house, as much as he could see of it, struck him as being also violently

neat; and yet, as Mrs. Somers jerked herself about the room to which she was consigning him, she continually wiped at imaginary dust spots on bureau, window sills, and chairs, with her apron.

"I'm sure I hope you'll be comfortable. I do the best I can f'r my boarders, 'f I do hev to do it all alone, so to speak." She seized hold of a window and rattled it violently open — a peg kind of fastening had to be pulled out, and kept from snapping back, when the window was lowered or raised — and she opened the outside blinds and threw them back with a slam. The orchard was just below, and a shriek of laughter from Jane sounded an unpleasant contrast to the low song he had heard at sunrise, as Joyful Heatherby washed the milk pans outside the summer kitchen underneath his window.

"Somers — Somers!" called "Ma" from the top of the stairs. "Well, I did think he'd hev th' sense to fetch up them things. Somers! Fetch up them things, won't you? Is there anything we c'n do f'r you before dinner, Mr. Thorn? I'm sure I —"

Mark hastened to ask, before she could tell him again that she did the best she could for her boarders, if he could get his box brought over from Willoughby Junction.

"I guess Somers c'n fetch it for you in th' dem'crat. Somers, can't ye fetch over his — what is it, did you say — box? Is it a big one?"

"My trunk, I mean. No, — not very."

"Can't ye fetch over his trunk f'm the station before dinner?" Somers set Mark's belongings inside the door, and thought slowly about it. "Can't ye put 'em over there out o' the way? Well, er you goin' to, er ain't you?"

"Guess I can. Better start after dinner, Ma, 't 's most nine now, 'nd it takes half an hour to hitch up."

"For th' land's sake! Most nine? Mr. Thorn, you must make yerself to home wherever ye be. I'll go and hurry up about them pies. Somers, you'd better get hitched up now; 'f you wait till after dinner, th' 's no tellin' when y' will get started."

She bustled off, and "Pa" slowly crept downstairs after her, and out to hitch up. Mark felt himself growing distinctly sorry for him, but he need not have been. "Pa" was contented to let "Ma" earn a living for him while he sat around at the village store, and dreamily gossiped with those who dropped in. He certainly was "enough to try the patience of a Saint," as his spouse often remarked. She had been remarking it for twenty-five years.

Mark had knocked about the world enough to be able to take things as he found them. As this was the only boarding house in the village, it must serve his purpose. He congratulated himself that, if the weather was fair, he need spend but little time on the premises, and rejoiced in the fact that he had arranged for a sail that afternoon with the old fisherman. Accordingly, after dinner, he climbed to a seat in the democrat beside Mr. Somers, to ride as far as the road leading to the cove, and as they jogged along, the personal history of various inhabitants was monotonously droned out to him. Aided by a few questions now and then, to keep the old man from too frequent digression, he soon had the cream of the village gossip, when he adroitly turned the stream of talk in the direction of those in whom he had already begun to take an artist's interest.

"Heatherbys? Yes, they've always lived wheer they

be, 'nd his father before him, 'nd his father before him, more'n likely. Mrs. Heatherby, she was a Spinner, 'nd come f' up Lynn way. Never knowed how he come to fall in with her, but the' do say — What say?"

"Are they quite alone? Have they no one but this granddaughter?"

"Guess they be. She's all they hev' now. Well, ye see 't was this way. They had one son 't they just lived and breathed for. They scraped 'nd saved 'nd give him a good ed'cation, college, 'nd well, he was wuth it. He was a good boy, fer a fact. I d' know 's I ever heard o' that boy doin' anything out o' the way — but then — I d' know 's you 'd expect it. Boys is a good deal like the stock they come from. Now on his ma's side, the' was a minister on her side, they say. Anyway, they 're good stock. I d' know 's any o' them 're left or not. I never heard o' but one brother, 'nd he was drowned some three years back. He was a cap'n, 'nd he was out — What say?"

"What became of the boy?"

"The boy? Oh, he growed up all right. Fine boy, too. Did n't make c'zactly what she set out to make of him, though. Well, ye see, 't was this way. She's pretty set, Mrs. Heatherby is, 'nd she 'd lay'd out to make a minister out o' him, same 's one o' her forbears was, 'r a teacher — somethin' settled down, but Land's sakes, make a settled-down man out o' a boy whose forbears was all sea cap'ns on both sides, pretty much! There was her father, 'nd his father 'fore him, 'nd there was her uncle, 'nd her brother — all she ever had — all lost their lives on the sea — 'nd there was Heatherby's father, 'nd all th' men folks on his side, they 've always owned that cove 'nd a few acres o'

land, 'nough to keep th' women folks on — sort o' family anchorage, so to speak. Men all followed the sea — born in 'em. Might 's well set out to fetch up a calf out o' a monkey's turn a born scaman into a minister or a college professor. Not but what they was good stock — good pious folk, fer's I see, but the' was — What say?"

"Did the boy take to the sea, then?"

"Like a fish. Well, ye see, 't was this way. Guess he had n't no idee o' goin' 'gainst his ma's will so — any rate he stuck to the studyin' — guess he liked it first-rate, too. Summers he'd spend on th' water, cruisin' round with his father. They had a first-rate boat them days — good fishin' boat. Don't know what's become of it. Some say 't was lost, 'nd some say 't was sold, but if 't was, no one ever heard what he got f'r it. Heatherby, he's close mouthed, 'nd I d' know's — What say? The boy? Yes, he went through college all right, no mistake. Guess he was up to th' top there, anyway he was cap'n o' their boat crew, 'nd they went over to England 'nd rowed there, 'nd he like to beat the Johnnies all out, — so the' say. That boy, he was a big fellow — big frame like his father. He c'd pull a boat — well, you never see — he c'd pull like an ox, 'nd give orders like a admiral. They were all that way, the Heatherbys — all commandin'. His father wan't so much so, but his grandfather, why, I 've heard them 'at knew him say th' wan't nobody 't could stand agin his eye. That was like the boy. He c'd hold his own wherever he went, 'nd the' wan't nobody but what he c'd have his way with. Well, when he come back f'm England with the college crew, you never see any man finer lookin' nor rosier. His ma thought the' never was a boy on earth before. Well,

that's natur'l, ma's is apt to be that way. Now, I knew a woman once, her name was Wade. She was a widow, 'nd she had three boys — What say?"

"Is the young girl there his daughter?"

"Who? Joy? Yes, she was his girl. Well, you can't have any idee unless you've watched folks 's I have, how them that's born to the sea pine away on land. Now that boy, he tried to work out his ma's plans, spent a year back in New York State, I d' know where, nor what he was doin', but he was just climbin' up — so the' say — but when he come home, I see he wan't what he was, 'nd I says to S'phi — that's Mrs. Somers — her name's S'phi, — I says, that fish 'll die 'f he don't have salt water, 'r salt air. He looked 's if he'd been fed on chalk 'nd water, 'nd his eyes 's big 'nd black 'nd hollow 's two burnt holes 'n a blanket. It does beat all how little some o' these great strappin' men c'n stand. Now I had a brother once, he was twice my heft — he up 'nd died with typhoid pneumonia, 'nd he wan't sick a week. I'd — What say?"

"Did he go to sea?"

"Who? My brother? No, he died."

"No, I mean the boy."

"Oh, the boy. Yes, he went. The' wan't nothin' else for him to do. He went on a long cruise 'nd was gone more 'n a year. When he come back, you never see such a change in any one in your life. He looked bigger 'nd browner, 'nd finer — I saw his ma standin' waitin' f'r him to land — his pa'd gone out in the fishin' boat 'nd met him, 'nd they come sailin' up the cove to their little pier in the evenin' blush, 'nd you'd ought to 'a' seen his ma — looked like all the sunlight the' was 'd got into her face 'nd eyes, 'ith a

drop o' two o' rain mixed in. He took 'er in his arms 'nd kissed her — jest the puttiest sight I ever did see, 'less I might say one."

As Somers talked, the reins hung below the dashboard in a festoon. He flapped them, now and then, and clucked to the horse, who gave no heed to the admonition, other than that indicated by a switch of the tail, or the laying back of an ear, and jogged on the same slow, even pace, suggested by the monotone of his driver's voice. Wishing to hear the end of the story of Heatherby's boy before they parted, Mark betrayed no impatience, but simply asked, "What one?"

"What say?"

"You said it was the prettiest sight you ever saw but one, and I asked, What one?"

"What one? That was when he brought his wife home. You see 't was this way. After that time he followed th' sea, 's he was born to do, 'nd one time they picked up a boat loaded with folks f'm a wreck, 'nd she was on that boat. 'T was f'm a French line, 'nd some say she was French, 'nd some say she was English. She might 'a' been both f'r all I know. Well, they cruised 'round some, I guess, anyhow they put some o' th' wrecked folks off on to another ship, 'nd some stayed by, — however 't was, the' was time enough f'r him to fall in love with her all 't once, 's boys will. The' was a story 't she'd seen him before, 't she was the girl 't pinned a rose on his coat over in England, that time our boys tried to win the cup. Well, 'f that was so, 't would go to show 't she was English, would n't it. Anyhow, his ship happened to be bound f'r a French port, 'nd her father 'nd mother was both drowned in th' wreck — they was in th' boat that

capsized — so the' say — 'nd the' wan't neither kith nor kin o' hers left f'r him to take her to, 'nd so she was bound to go to a little village in France where they'd been living — well, that would go to show 't she was French now, too. However, that ain't neither here nor there, but this much I was told, square, 'nd I guess it was so. Ye see, how I come to hear it all, the stewardess of his ship, she got tired o' sailin', 'nd kind o' off her feed some, 'nd she stayed one whole winter 't our house — she had her board cheap that winter, too — she said this girl sot there gaz'n' off on the sea, lookin' more like a spirit 'n she did like a human. She never shed a tear, nor took on like some, but just sot there lookin' like her soul'd go out o' her eyes after somp'n she see 'nd no one else, 'nd so forlorn, 'ith nobody to look to. Thefolks she was took on with was all rough sailor men, 'nd one Irish woman f'm the steerage — rest was all on the other boat. Ye see, she was a brave little thing, the men said, 'nd she just pushed her ma and pa on ahead o' her into th' first boat, 'nd then the' wan't room f'r her, so she was put in th' other one, 'nd that separated them. So 't come, 't when she see the other boat capsize, 't she thought she'd killed them. Land sakes! She done the best she could. She had n't a thing on earth but the clo's she had on, 'nd they was all torn 'nd draggled in sea water 'nd tar. She never seemed to care how she looked, just sot there 'ith her hands in her lap 'nd her eyes on th' sea."

They were passing the Drew homestead, and the invalid was seated in her chair on the piazza. Within, some one was singing a slumber song of Schumann's, and playing a perfect accompaniment.

"Who is that playing?" asked Mark.

"That must be 'Liz'beth. The' 's nobody here c'n play 'nd sing 's she can. Well, I calc'late she 'd ought to. She 's been over in Europe, they say, 'nd took lessons o' th' best. They're proud folks, those Drews — she is, at any rate. Now we've tried to get her to teach Jane, 'nd you suppose she 'd do it? Not much! 'nd there she 'll take Joy Heatherby in hand, 'nd teach her f'r nothin'. Well, let her do 's she's a mind to. S'phi 's got a teacher f'r Jane now 't c'n play on the piano like a steam engine. We don't need to be behold'n to her any." Somers gave a cluck to the horse, and a more decided flap to the reins, and for a moment they took a livelier pace. Mark hastened to turn him back to his unfinished tale.

"You were talking about the boy," he said.

"Heatherby's boy? Yes. Well, so 't was. He c'd make anybody do whatever he wanted 'em to. It was his way. He 'd look at 'em 'nd talk quiet, 'nd kind o' draw 'em. When he 'd look ye right in the eye, why, then ye 'd feel either like gitt'n' down 'nd crawlin' off, 'r else ye 'd have to go his way. 'T was what I call a drawin' kind o' way. Well, he stood it 's long 's he could, 'nd then he broke through that kind o' wall o' stillness she 'd set up around her. He woke her up. Once she said to him, 'I can't talk to you. I feel 's if I were dead.' He just stooped down, 'nd she looked in his eyes — she had to — 'nd then he lifted her up, 'nd pulled her hand through his arm. 'You must n't sit this way 'r you will be,' he said, 'walk up 'nd down 'ith me a little. It 's so calm 't 'll do ye good,' 'nd she did. Then she begged him not to try to save her — said she wished 't she was dead, but he kep' on walkin' and talkin' to her in that low, quiet way o' his; 'nd by 'm by he brought her back, 'nd set beside

her, 'nd after that he never left her side when she was there. Well, he drew her on to talk, 'nd found out all about her. 'T seems her pa 'd been sick, and they 'd lived in the south o' France f'r his health, till the doctor said 't he 'd got to die; so they was goin' back to England, 'nd everything 'd been sold 'nd turned into money but her pa's books, 'nd her ma would n't sell them — 'nd could n't, if she would, more 'n likely. They've got them books now over to Heatherby's. I see 'em once when I was doin' a job o' carpenterin' in a great closet top o' th' stairs.

"So 't seems 't he comforted her up some, 'nd promised he 'd do anything she wanted, 'nd she wanted to go back to that place, 'nd get them books, 'nd then go to England, 'nd teach French for a livin'. It wan't very far f'm where he was goin', so when they got into port, he took th' stewardess 'long, 'nd they went there 'nd stayed a spell, — some kind o' name she told S'phi — I forget what — 'nd he give the woman some money, 'nd sent her out with the girl, to get her some new clo'es.

"She said the girl tried to get him to take a locket she had tied to a string 'bout her neck, 't had her ma's picture in, 'nd was made o' gold, 'nd set with diamonds, 'nd a ring on the same string 't her ma 'd put there, sayin' 't they might get parted, 'nd it 'ud be same's money to her, but Land sakes! He would n't touch them things, — said she might pay him back sometime, though, so 't she 'd feel right. Well, they went, 'nd she come back dressed all in black, 'nd he looked at her 'nd did n't seem satisfied. Then he took her out into th' flower garden o' th' house they was stoppin' at, 'nd walked round with her a spell, amongst the flower bushes, 'nd he looked in her face, 'nd she looked down, 'nd

he kep' on talkin', till by 'm by she looked up in his eyes. The woman said she was peekin' through the blinds o' th' girl's window. For the life of her she said she could n't help it, 'nd she see him. He kissed her, right there on th' spot, 'nd the girl put both hands over her face, 'nd he took 'em down, 'nd then they walked on a spell. By 'm by they come in, 'nd he went into th' parlor, 'nd she came upstairs where the stewardess was — her name was Jones, Hannah Jones — 'nd she says, 'I think I'll lie down awhile, Mrs. Jones, I — I'm tired,' 'nd she did.

“Pretty soon Mrs. Jones, she see her shoulders shakin', 'nd she knew she was cryin'. First time she seen her cry a tear, but she knew 't would do her good, so she went out 'nd walked in th' flower garden a spell herself — she could n't go in the parlor where he was, pacin' up 'nd down there like a lion in a circus cage. When she went back upstairs the girl was standin' at th' window, 'nd her eyes was shinin' 'nd her cheeks was red, 'nd she went to th' glass 'nd began brushin' her hair. It was dark hair 'nd hung most to the floor, so long she had to ketch it by th' middle 'nd brush out the end, 'nd then brush out th' top some way. That was the first time Mrs. Jones see her look in th' glass, too. Well, that night she never went down where he was — had her supper sent up. He stayed in the little parlor all alone, 'nd when Mrs. Jones came down he sot by th' table 'ith his head bowed in his arms, 'nd he looked up 'nd he says: 'How is she?' 'nd she says, 'She's been cryin' some, but that's just what she needs,' 'nd he says somethin' under his breath, 'nd began walkin' the floor again. Long after they got to bed they c'd hear him walkin' up 'nd down, up 'nd down, but the girl did n't say nothin'.

"Next mornin', when she was brushing her long hair 'gain, she says, 'D' you think 't would be very bad 'f I was to wear all white 'stead o' all black? Mr. Heatherby wants me to,' 'nd Mrs. Jones says, 'Why, everybody does his way, 'nd I guess you'll come to it. Anyhow, white's a sort o' mournin' — 't ain't so depressin' on a young sperit. I guess the cap'n's all right. He gen'rally is.'

"Well, when they went down to breakfast, Mrs. Jones, she stayed back a little 's if she'd gone f'r somethin', but not too far to hear, 'nd he says, very low, 'I took advantage of you. I could n't help it — God forgive me. Will you? Will you?' 'nd the girl said somethin' so soft she could n't hear, but 't was all right she guessed, f'r when she came in there they sot 'ith the breakfast table between 'em, 'nd a place f'r her at the end, 'nd the girl was lookin' at her plate, 'nd he kep' lookin' at her 's if he could n't ever quit, 'nd she never lifted her eyes but once, 'nd then 't was to look square into his, 'nd down again. Well, then she was goin' to see some o' th' folks o' th' village she used to know, 'nd he said 't he'd go with her. So they walked out, she all in black, 'nd he lookin' at her 's if he never see a girl before. She picked a rose 'nd a bud from a flower bush 's they walked down the path, 'nd when they come back 't was evenin', 'nd of all things in the world! Mrs. Jones said 't took her breath away. He'd had his way, f'r sure. She was dressed all in white — white dress, 'nd white shawl — silk one — 'nd she had th' rose in her dress, 'nd he had the bud in his coat buttonhole, 'nd he says, 'Mrs. Jones, I've brought this young lady back again. She's my wife. We've been married in the church, 'nd some o' her good friends stood as witnesses.'

"Mrs. Jones said, f'r all she 'd seen 'nd heard 'nd was in a sort prepared f'r it, you could ha' knocked her down with a feather. But 't was heartsome to see 'em after that. 'T was his kind o' drawin' way.

"Well, then, they got her pa's books 'nd sent 'em to the ship, 'nd then he took her to England, to see her pa's folks. Well, that 'ud go to show 't she was English, would n't it? More 'n likely she was. Then he fetched her here. 'T was then, 's I say, the purtiest sight I ever did see, when he handed her over to his ma, 'nd she took her in her arms 'nd kissed her, 'nd then drawed off 'nd looked at her, 'nd he 'nd his pa watchin' 'em, 'nd then his pa says, 'Why, ma, ain't I goin' to be 'lowed to kiss her, too?' 'nd she turned 'nd put up her two arms, 'nd drawed his head down 'nd kissed him on the cheek.

"I see that much, 'nd then I went off down to th' landin'. I was there to haul the things f'm the boat. Heatherby, he always used to go out to meet his boy some'eres, 'nd that was the way he always come home, sailin' up the cove to their little pier in his father's fishin' boat.

"Well, that was a good spell ago. Let 's see, it must ha' been twenty year — but I never forget. I never forget a courtin' anyway, once 't I hear of it."

"And now they are both gone?" said Mark.

"Yes, both gone. But they was the happiest, lovin'est couple you ever did see, 'nd purty to look at, too. Le's see. Two 'nd one 's three, 'nd one — yes, 't was four year ago. Remember the' was a spell o' bad weather tore up th' shippin' early in the fall? Well, that time the sea took them both. The old lady like to died over it f'r a spell, 'nd then she picked up again, but the' do say she ain't been quite right

in her head since, though I never see anything out o' the way. Now they just live f'r that girl. Mis' Heatherby never lets her out o' her sight, hardly — never sent her to school, f'r fear somethin' 'd happen to her. Jane says 't they're bringin' her up a perfect fool. They do say 't her ma, the girl 't Heatherby's boy fished out o' the sea 'nd married, was real smart, 'nd taught the girl herself. Jane says 't she learned that child to talk French 'nd read Latin, too. Land sakes! Whatever c'n a poor girl do with them things? She never learnt her any 'rithmetic to speak of, 'nd sence she lost her ma, Jane says 't she don't believe that child 's learnt one single thing, 'cept what she picks up down to 'Liz'beth's. Well, you get down here. I turn this way. You 'll find Heatherby's down the road a piece, just hid by them trees."

CHAPTER IV

"ICI NOUS SOMMES HEUREUX"

"Yea, but," quoth she, "the perill of this place
I better wot than you: Though nowe too late
To wish you backe returne with foul disgrace,
Yet wisdom warnes, whilst foot is in the gate,
To stay the steppe, ere forced to retrate.
This is the Wandering Wood, this Errours Den,
A monster vile, whom God and man does hate:
Therefore I read, beware."

— *The Faerie Queene.*

MARK THORN walked on musing. He thought of Joyful's father in his love-making, and of the young wife, and then of the little child, born in the cottage and growing up in that lonely spot, within sound of the sea. He no longer wondered at the charm of the girl, nor at the frank, unshrinking gaze that met his with a sort of other-worldliness in it—at least with none of this worldliness to infuse therein even a hint of self-consciousness. Arriving at the house, he saw no one, but heard her singing, and followed the sound of her voice. There she stood, the dasher of the churn lifted in one hand, peering into the depths of the deep stone jar. She looked up and smiled. Having seen him before, that morning, a greeting seemed to her unnecessary.

"Grandfather's down at the pier. He's waiting for you, I think," she said.

"Has the butter come?" Mark was loth to go. "I used to churn for mother. Let me see if I can do it now."

"No, no. You'll spoil it, and spatter your clothes, too." She deftly slipped the handle of the dasher from the cover, from which she removed the cream with her finger, and then began whirling the dasher about the inside of the churn.

"What do you do that for?" he asked.

"I'm gathering it. See?"

"How good it smells!" He looked in at the golden ball floating in the white milk, and then glanced down the path. "I hope I have n't kept your grandfather waiting too long."

"No—he has to bring up the boat anyway. If you can wait another minute, I'll go down with you and take him a pitcher of buttermilk. Do you like it?"

"I do, indeed."

"Look in now. See how nice and hard the butter is."

Obediently he looked in, then leaned against the door post, and watched her swift movements until she had the golden ball drained, and rinsed, and carried away. Then he held the pitcher while she filled it, dipping the milk, in which tiny yellow bits were still floating, with an earthen cup. "Now!" she said, snatching her sunbonnet, and they started on the path that meandered down to the curved shore line.

"Did you make the butter we had this morning? Do you always make it? It was fine."

"Yes, I made that. Sometimes I make it, and sometimes grandmother does. She is n't feeling well to-day. She never does when grandfather goes out with his boat—but then—I think he'd die if he could n't go off on a sail now and then." She paused, and looked wistfully in his face. "You—you'll not be away very long, will you?"

"Oh, no, no. I only wish to explore the coast a little."

We won't be gone more than three hours at the most — not so long, if you don't wish it."

"It's grandmother — I would go myself for that matter, but she — she worries so while he's out."

"I'll bear it in mind," said Mark, gently.

The cottage stood on a decided rise of ground, and the path led away from the road by which Mark came, through a green pasture lot. A field of low blueberry bushes on one side skirted the woods, which stretched away inland, not dense as in midsummer, but delicately clothed in young spring green. The slope of the land was gradual until it terminated in a high bluff-like terrace, down which a steep path led them, with many crooks and turns, to the tide-washed sands. Here Joyful called two undulating notes, sweet and strong, as if blown upon a flute, and her grandfather's shout came up to them from the boat, which swung at the far end of the pier with all sails set, for the breeze was light. As they started down the bluff, Mark turned, but Joyful darted past him ere he could give her his hand, and was out on the sands, waving her glasses to her grandfather, before he was halfway down. "Fresh buttermilk, grand-daddy," she cried, and the old man stepped out on the pier.

"So. She kept you waiting for grand-daddy's buttermilk, did she?" he said, as Mark came up with the pitcher. Then they sat on the pier together and drank it, while Joyful stood watching the waves creep up the sands and back again.

"Isn't it pretty here?" she said, at last. "See them curl and gather themselves together, and then slide back. They are never tired."

"Are you ever?" asked Mark, looking up at her.

She smiled and shook her head, but kept her eyes fixed on the sea, the long, shining line of which could be seen outside their protected little haven. "How far it is," she said, "over there, beyond that line. You have been there in the outside. It seemed so different, as I heard you talking last night, from what I always used to imagine."

"What did you imagine?" said Mark.

"Oh, everything. I used to think this little spot was the only safe place in all the world. That was because, when I used to beg to go away with father, mother used to say, when we stood here and watched the boat sailing off, and off, until it was only a speck on that line — 'Non, non, ma petite — ici nous sommes heureux. Tout y est bon, et on respire le bonheur. Le Bon Dieu nous a conduit ici, et à cette même place t' a donnée à nous. Donc aime-le bien, et prie-le de nous ramener bientôt Papa.' " She spoke with an impetuous rush of words, and as suddenly paused.

"Your mother was certainly right; it is one of the safe places of the world. What else did you use to imagine?"

"Monsters of the deep. I believed in them. Sometimes early, when the rest were asleep, I would run down to the edge of the hill there, and watch the clouds piled up on the far-away edge where the sky comes down to the sea, for I thought they were the tangled-up heads and tails of the monsters, and that my father was out there fighting them. When the sun came up and turned them all into gold and they would float away, then I thought my father had conquered; but when it would be dark and they would seem to go down into the sea, I thought they had gone to hatch some more. But then I was a child. We never think such

things nowadays — do we, grand-daddy? I suppose I should n't tell of them now, either, for now I am grown a woman, and must 'put away childish things.'" She sighed then, and turning, looked back at the cottage.

"Who ever told ye such a thing as that, child?" said the old man, wiping his mouth, and setting his glass on the pier with a rap.

"Grandmother, and so did Elizabeth yesterday. My chin comes up to her shoulder now, and she's my 'Ladye Faire' and knows what's right."

Her grandfather looked dubiously straight before him. "I guess you're going to be my little girl's long's you live, if ye'r chin comes up to the moon," he said.

"Yes, grand-daddy, I will — always." She clasped her two hands about his face, and tipped his head back until she could look into his eyes, and then kissed his seamed forehead. Mark stood looking at the two as she bent over the kindly old face, with the loving light in her eyes, and a new sensation awoke within him. It was sweet to feel, and pleasant to remember.

Joyful released her grandfather, and turned toward Mark suddenly. "Do you know how to manage a boat, too?" she asked.

"One like this I do. I am used to sailing."

"Then you must take good care of my grandfather," she said, laughing. "He is all the playmate I have."

The old man rose with a laugh, straightened his gaunt figure, and swung out his long arms. Then he began hauling on the ropes that held the craft to the pier, and stepped in. "Guess we'd better start," he said.

"All right," said Mark. "Good-bye, Miss —" He

was going to say Miss Heatherby, but a glance at her grandfather's face made him pause. "Good-bye, Miss Joyful. Thank you for the good buttermilk. I may not see you again for some time, for I'm to be put off on the other side of the point."

"Good-bye," she said, in a low voice, as if her thoughts were elsewhere. She took his offered hand, and her fingers closed warmly over his, with a touch he liked.

"I wish you were going, too," he said.

"Yes, yes, grand-daddy, let me go, too." She held out her arms to him impulsively. "Oh, grand-daddy, come."

"This boat's Mr. Thorn's for the rest of the day," said the old man hesitatingly, glancing at the sky.

"Of course, I forgot," she stooped to pick up the glasses.

"No, no. It is yours, Miss Joyful. Please come. It was my thought first, you know."

But she stood hesitating, her shining eyes on her grandfather. Her bonnet hung by the strings across her white throat, and the breeze tossed her brown hair across her face. Thorn waited with hand extended to help her in. "Come, child, come. We'll both enjoy the sail better for havin' ye along," said the old man at last.

"Then we'll put these in the boat, please." She handed the pitcher and glasses to Mark, who passed them on. "If grandmother should come down and find them here, she'd think I'd fallen in, and be frightened to death."

Her grandfather cast another look at the sky. "I d' know," he said, "'s we shall get anywhere now, the wind's died down so."

"I'm happy sitting here and looking at the sea and shore, if the boat does n't move," said Mark, settling himself

in a corner, and looking past Joyful's smiling face at the silver line of the open sea.

"Oh, there is enough wind to get out o' the cove; all is, I don't want to get off 'nd have it drop 'nd keep us out so long 's to frighten Marthy."

"You could put me out in the small boat, and I could row back and tell her you were all right," said Joyful.

Her grandfather was fetching the craft around, and they drew away from the pier, moving so smoothly over the surface of the bay that they seemed to be standing still, while the woods and shore line crept backwards. Mark sat facing Joyful, while she, with her hands clasped behind her head, leaned against a mast, and gazed with dreamy eyes at the slowly fading shore.

"I suppose growing old is like that," she said, at last.

"Like what?" asked Mark, in some surprise.

"Why, you see the shore seems to be moving, and going away, and fading out, and that is the way with things we do, or play when we are little. First they are clear and distinct, and all around us, just as the shore was a few minutes ago; and then they begin to go back, farther and farther, and new days come, so still, one after another, that we think we are standing still, and the things we did and thought are going away behind us, and all becoming in a sort of mist; while really it is we who are running from them, and finding new things all the time."

The old man was at the far end of the boat examining some nets, unheeding the talk. Mark was pleased. This young girl, with mind as yet untrammelled by any conventional lines of modern thought or life was becoming more and more interesting to him. He decided to make

a sketch of her pose as she sat there with smiling, parted lips, and fumbled about for his notebook and pencil, as he said, "If that were all there is to growing old, it would n't be such a very unpleasant thing, would it?"

"Is it?" she said softly.

Mark laughed, and scratched away with his pencil. "You haven't grown old long enough yet to know, so I sha'n't tell you. You will find out for yourself."

"Have you?" she asked.

"Well, hardly, yet."

"Then how could you tell me?"

"Ah, but I have lived longer than you, and I have been about the world and have observed." Her expression changed tantalizingly from moment to moment. Now she leaned forward, looking inquiringly in his face, and he turned over a leaf, leaving the first pose unfinished. "I will go back to it again, for she will be sure to take it. I will make her, if she does not," he thought.

"Of course I know that. It was very interesting, your talk last evening. I wish you would talk more. Are you making a picture now?" she glanced behind her. "There is nothing to make there. Do you make them out of your mind? May I see it?"

"I am only making marks now — taking notes. Yes, sometimes I make pictures out of my mind, but first I must make them in my mind. No, I can't let you see this for it isn't made yet. Sometime, when I have my materials with me, I will make you a picture all your own, and let you watch me do it."

Her eyes shone with pleasure. "That would be good of you, to let me see you make one, but I should not want you

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Her eyes shone with pleasure. "That would be good of you, to let me see you make one, but I should not want you

to give it to me. Won't you talk now, as you did last night, about, — oh, about all the world?"

"Oh, that's too big a subject for so small a boat, and so small a young lady. It would swamp us."

"I shall ask you questions, as grandfather did. That's the way to make you talk."

"Very well, fire away, only don't let them hit too hard."

She was silent a moment. Suddenly, with a low laugh she asked, "Did you ever fight any monsters of the deep? We are going into the outside now. They are all out here." She glanced behind her again, with a little shiver.

"Yes — at least — I have tried to fight some of them," said Mark, gravely, working rapidly on.

She regarded him earnestly. "Of course, you know I don't really believe all that, even if I have never been away from our little cove. I know what they mean."

"What do they mean? Tell me."

She laughed again. "Oh, if you've fought them, you know what they mean."

"Ah, yes. But they may mean one thing to me and another to you. So tell me what they mean to you."

She looked down and was silent a moment. "Why," she said at last, "as I have never been out in the world, I have to imagine them, as I used to imagine in the first place. When I was very little I thought they were really and truly dragons and monsters such as the 'Gentle Knight' in the 'Faerie Queene' went out to fight; but then I came to think afterwards that they meant the trials and temptations and the despondency that one has to fight away before one can ever be anything. That's what they mean to me now."

"I guess they mean very much the same thing to both of us, Miss Joyful. I have n't fought many of the first, but I have of the last."

"Why?" she asked gravely.

"Why? I can hardly tell you. It was because I came near losing my ideals. I had to fight to keep them. When a man, especially an artist, loses his ideals he loses his own soul. He's worth nothing after that."

She leaned back, greatly to his satisfaction, with her hands clasped behind her head as before and he turned again to the unfinished pose. Presently she said in a low voice, as if thinking audibly, "By ideals do you mean the pictures you make in your mind, the way Michael Angelo made the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel? I suppose he made them in his mind first, did n't he? Or do you mean something — something more?"

"I mean more — much more, Miss Joyful." I can scarcely tell you all I mean. It is something like an aspiration — where one gets one's inspiration from above one's self. If an artist loses his ideals he cannot make pictures in his mind any more. The power goes from him. It's like — how can I tell you? — a continual reaching up —"

"I think I understand." She turned toward him with suddenly illumined face. "Ideals are like God close to him. He reaches up and there is God, and just below is his own heart, and all the world is down underneath him; but when he loses his ideals his heart goes down, and the world gets above him, and God is not there. The monsters are the things which steal his ideals. He must fight them."

"Ah, there you are a wise little woman, Miss Joyful."

She made a slight movement, as if disturbed in a pleasant

dream. "No, I'm not wise. I've never been to school. I wish I could." She glanced back at her grandfather, who still sat working at his nets in the far end of the boat watching the sky and shifting a sail now and then, and added in a low tone, "You see, I can't leave them, and they could n't send me, anyway."

"I'm glad you've never been to school." Mark spoke warmly. "You're far better as you are. Who taught you about the Sistine Chapel, and the things of which we've been talking?"

"My mother," she said sadly. "I can talk of her to you and grandfather, but never to grandmother. It makes her ill. You'll never speak of them to her, will you?"

"No, Miss Joyful, I never will. But sometime you'll tell me about them, won't you?" he said gently.

"I love to talk about father and mother. I don't want ever to forget how they looked, and the things they used to say to each other and to me." They were silent awhile. Suddenly Joyful looked straight into his eyes with the same grave regard he had noticed the evening before, and then with a light sigh, turned her gaze on the sea, but did not speak.

Mark felt that in the maid's heart were sacred places, yet longed to venture therein. "What were you thinking just now? Will you tell me?" he said at last.

"I was thinking how far away yesterday seems, when I was walking in the lane and you came and spoke to me. One would think now that you'd always known us. Is that the way it is in the world? Do people feel so quickly as if they had always known each other, and talk right along about things they care much for?"

"I think not, Miss Joyful — or very seldom. Some people hold aloof who have known each other for years, and never feel even so well acquainted as we do now. I think in order to feel as we do, people must be kindred spirits, or have something in common; then time does n't make so much difference, and they can talk together of things they care much for without having to wait."

"But we — we are so far apart in everything. How could we be kindred spirits, or have anything in common, unless —" she hesitated.

"Unless what, were you going to say?"

Still she paused. "I'm afraid what I was going to say might seem presumption on my part, so I won't say it," she said, at last.

"I don't believe it could be." She was silent, and Mark, gifted with that tact which is so rare in a man, guessed she feared she had talked too freely with a stranger to conform to the conventionalities of the outer world, and took the best means of reassuring her. "A few times in my life — a very few times — this has happened to me as it has now, when I have felt immediately a common interest, a sense of camaraderie and good fellowship; and in each instance it has resulted in a very strong friendship. So you see how pleasant it must be, as one knocks about in the world, to come upon what I call kindred spirits. Won't you tell me what you were going to say when you said 'unless'?"

"We have always lived so far apart and are so different — I was thinking how impossible it is that we could have anything in common, as you said, unless, perhaps, the one thing — that we may both have ideals."

"I think that is just it, Miss Joyful."

Again she looked squarely in his eyes with that clear, searching gaze. Mark felt a sense of satisfaction in the thought that, whatever his failings, he need not turn away from it. "Now you're thinking something more," he said. "Tell me again, won't you?"

She smiled, and then laughed outright. "First we are old, and then we are young, and so we keep changing. I was thinking how real those monsters of the deep used to be to me, and then all at once I wondered what you would have been if you had not fought them — if you had lost your ideals, or had n't cared. Would you have been sailing with us now? Would we have felt as if we had known you, or would grandmother have asked you to stay — and would grand-daddy have cared to talk with you all the evening long? Somehow I feel as if it all would n't have happened, and yesterday would seem only yesterday and not years ago, and I had grown up since then."

While they talked, Mark had succeeded in getting some characteristic sketches of her in his book, and was pleased, but not satisfied. He turned leaf after leaf, and still scratched away. She gave no heed to his occupation, but seemed wholly wrapped in her thoughts.

"Again you're right, Miss Joyful, — perfectly so. For one thing, I would n't have been a disconsolate, tired fellow tramping along the road where I met you, and — a good many things would have been different, more than I can tell you."

"What would you have been?"

"Ah, I don't like to think. I'm afraid I'd have been — Let's not consider that — Shall we?"

Joyful looked off over the sea, shading her eyes with her

hand. "See how far away we are now. Our pier is only a little white speck behind us, and grandfather is tacking toward the shore." Then she turned upon Mark like a sudden breeze. "Mr. Thorn, I'm glad you did fight them. I hope if they come again you'll fight more."

"That I will," said Mark, heartily. "Your monsters are very real things. You'd never dream it was for that I came to your quiet little cove — that I must fight battles here. Now, you see, I've told you a secret, and yet I never saw you until last evening. When I sat in the peacefulness of your grandfather's little cottage I was fighting them by putting everything sordid and mean away from me. We can't always do that, when we're out in the world, with your monsters, Miss Joyful."

Then they were silent for a time, while she watched the sunlight quivering on the water, and dreamed. Mark's thoughts were full of another face — a face of which he knew every line. He began a drawing of it opposite the spirituelle glance he had just traced of one of Joyful's moods, and then, almost petulantly, drew his pencil many times across it, obliterating the lines, and turning over a leaf, made there a pretty, finished drawing of the remembered face.

He wondered what Louise would do with this child if she could get hold of her. "She would begin by admiring her immensely," he thought, "and then would try to remodel her after some mental pattern of her own, and say she was educating her. She would take this wild wood bird, that flies toward its Creator with the morning light — that rises above the world and soars in divine ether, and smooth down its feathers, and clip its wings, and tie it to her own little stake by a string only so long as her own mental reach. She

would fence her about with a paling of conventional poles so high she could not see over them, so close she could not see through them, and then she would say: 'Now, little one, don't flutter and beat your heart out — if you have a heart. I'm going to stay here and educate you and feed you with a nice little preparation I've made all myself, from most wholesome ingredients that I've gathered with great care and labor. In India, among the Brahmins, and in China, among the Buddhists, and in Turkey, among the Moham-medans, and even among the ancient Chaldeans have I searched for this. It is more wholesome than the food God — if there be a God — gives his children; so open your mouth, little one.' "

"Mr. Thorn," said Joyful, waking from her dream, "are you making a funny picture?"

Mark laughed heartily. "I will let you see this in a minute, then you can judge for yourself," he said, and she relapsed contentedly into her thoughtful mood.

"Mr. Thorn," she said at last, "I was thinking 'of what you said a moment ago about monsters being out there, and the peacefulness in our little cove. Perhaps that was what mother meant when she used to say: 'Ici nous sommes heureux, Petite.' "

"I have no doubt of it."

"I suppose I will have to go out into it all, sometime. I can't always have grandfather and live here, and — even if I could — " she stopped, and when Mark looked up there were tears in her eyes.

"Don't think of it, Miss Joyful. Enjoy the peace and happiness while you have them, and we'll hope that, when the time comes, the great world will deal gently with you."

"It isn't that I'm afraid. You may think me very strange, but —" she glanced back at the old man, who was watching the wind and bringing the boat in to skirt the shore, and leaned toward Mark and spoke in lowered tone. "I often long to go off somewhere — to see people and know about them, and how other girls do — and hear music, and see pictures, and learn to do something — I don't know what — but —"

"I know things you can do now, that few young ladies can. You can row a boat — can't you?"

"Oh, yes, but then —"

"You can make butter, and make a garden — and —"

"Oh, of course — but I mean make something beautiful."

"Your butter is beautiful, Miss Joyful."

"But that's something to be eaten up. You know what I mean — something to last — now you are laughing at me."

"I'm not. I'm only thinking how short a time your butter would last if I lived there, and how much you would have to make."

She laughed too. "I'd make you do the churning, and then you'd get no time for your pictures. Then you'd know how I feel sometimes. Now may I see it?"

Not wishing to awaken self-consciousness in her by allowing her to see the other pages, he shifted his seat and crossing to her side held the book before her. "There! Would you call that a funny picture?" he asked.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and then "Oh!" again. "How beautifully you work! Is this some one you know, or have you made it out of your mind? Must — must you have ideals to make one like this?"

"I'll answer all your questions when you tell me if you like her."

"Ah, that's not fair." She leaned over and looked carefully and long at the face, while he still held the book, unwilling to relinquish it to her hand. At length she said, lifting her eyes to his: "I can't see why you should look as if you were making something ridiculous when you were making this, whether it's from your mind, or whether it's some one you know."

"Did I look so?"

"Yes. And if you should look so when you were making a picture of me or of my grandfather, I would n't like it. If your ideals make you look so when you work, I don't believe I'd care to have them, after all."

"I know a writer who jots down ideas which occur to him, which he does n't wish to forget, in a little book. He calls it making notes. That is the way I use these little drawings I make in this sketchbook. They are my notes. Now, tell me, did I look as if I were making something ridiculous when I was making my other notes, before I did this one?"

"I didn't think of it, but I guess not. If you had, I should have noticed it."

"Why?" he asked, closing the book, and slapping the palm of one hand with it.

"Because."

He laughed. "That's such a decisive and final 'because' one would think you'd given an excellent reason."

She laughed merrily with him. "I have. It's all the reason you'll get, too."

"Very well, that settles it. Now, look at this again."

He held the book open before her. "Tell me — do you think she is pretty?"

"Why — I think —" she looked searchingly at him.

"Ah, you can't tell by looking at me, you must look at the drawing."

"Why — I think —" She glanced down, then suddenly raising her eyes, and looking into his very soul, she asked, "Do you love her? Is she a real person?"

Mark leaned his elbow on his knee and his head in his hand, still holding the book before her and gazed off on the sea. "That's a question I can't answer, the first is —" he said gently, "I can the second. Yes, she's a real person; at least I think she is. Sometimes she seems unreal."

"I ought n't to have asked that question, ought I? I'm sorry. They don't ask such questions out there, do they?"

"Do you mean out in the world, as you call it?"

"Yes."

"No — hardly; but you need n't mind what they do out there. You're not there, and here you may ask any questions you please."

"I only asked because I did n't wish to say anything you would n't — that would n't be pleasant to hear said of anybody one loved — but then — it would n't make any difference to you what I might say. You're only amusing yourself, and I —"

"No, Miss Joyful. I am in earnest. I wish to know what you think about this face. Go on."

"It need n't make any difference, anyway, whatever I may say. I could only guess and make up about it, as I make up stories and fancies. I don't know any real people to judge

by, only people in my books, and those in my mind that I make up as I do my dragons and monsters."

"Miss Joyful," he said, pleadingly, "tell it just as you would if you had seen it, and had never heard of me. Nothing will hurt me that you can say, and after you are through I will tell you a secret about it that will interest you."

"All right," she said joyously. "I like to make up about pictures of people, just as I do about Mary Queen of Scots, or Marie Antoinette. Let's see—" she bent over the face earnestly. "I like queens. Let's pretend first that she's a queen—shall we?"

"Yes, yes. That's right."

"And we'll pretend that she's very beautiful—?"

"That's for you to tell me, you know."

"Well, queens always are beautiful, so we'll have herso—at least when she forgets she's a queen, and loves some one else."

"Some one else than who?"

"Why—than herself."

Mark was inwardly convulsed. She caught a glimpse of the satirical smile she had seen before, and stopped. "Go on, Miss Joyful," he said.

"You look that way again."

"I was only wondering what she would say if she could hear you say that. You see, she calls herself an altruist—one who loves the whole world—you understand—everybody in it? She says that's her religion."

"Oh—then—let me see. Do you mean she loves the whole world, and nobody in particular?"

"Yes—maybe that is it."

"Oh. Then we'll pretend she's very wonderfully beauti-

ful when she's loving somebody in particular; and not just herself and the whole world. And we'll pretend she has a look no one can understand, but that when one sees her one becomes fascinated by her, and thinks of her day and night — in the old days, in Greece, you know, people thought there were beings like that — and follows her wherever she goes, and although she likes it she never sees them, only now and then in a sideways kind of a glance, but that she always looks away off at the whole world. And we'll pretend she wears long white robes like a Greek goddess, and that one goes down on one's knees when she passes, and catches at her robes, and kisses them, and cries out, 'Don't love the whole world, Queen, love me, love me,' but she only puts out her hand and gathers her robe around her, and is very calm and cold, as if she were carved all out of beautiful white stone, so that she could walk through the fire without burning, and her lips curve a little more than they do here, and she says, 'What are you, that I should love you in particular? Don't you see that I must love all these millions and millions who are looking at me, and that I am a queen?' and all the world is so wide and so far away that —"

Mark took the book away from her with a laugh, and buttoned it inside his coat.

"You said I might say anything I pleased about it, and I'm not through. Does she make every one do what she wishes, and think what she wishes, whether they wish to or not?"

Mark nodded. "Not quite every one. Almost."

"Now what's the interesting secret you were going to tell about it? I'm not through, but you've taken the book away, and that ends the story."

"It is this. The lady whom this drawing is like, is one of those terrible monsters you were telling about. So you see, they're not always ugly. Sometimes they're very beautiful, as she is."

"Why should you speak of her so?" said Joyful, pityingly, opening wide her eyes.

"Because she can quietly and charmingly tear down more ideals in a single evening's chat than the most hideous monster man ever set eyes on — and — as to fighting her — It's hard to fight so beautiful a creature."

"Yes." Joyful spoke thoughtfully and slowly. "I suppose the only thing to do with such a monster would be to disarm it so it could n't fight."

"Again you are a wise little woman, Miss Joyful. Where do you get your wisdom?"

She smiled and shook her head. "I'm not talking to appear wise — and — do you know — I like to talk to you better than any one I've ever seen since father and mother were with me — only for one thing."

What she said pleased Mark. He had become so strongly interested in her that he was even touched with a little pleasant vanity at her frank confession. "And what is the one thing that spoils it, Miss Joyful?" he said smilingly.

"Oh, I did n't feel it until after you made that picture."

"I don't know what I did. I would n't have this hour spoiled for me by the thought of anything not pleasant to you, Miss Joyful; tell me what it is as frankly and freely as you would have done before I made it. Won't you?"

"It was n't the picture, Mr. Thorn — please don't think that. I don't know what it was — unless —"

"Don't stop at 'unless.'"

"Why — perhaps it was the look you had — as if — Oh, I can't tell you. It was nothing."

"Ah, no. It was something. What was it?"

"Tell me. Out in the world do people talk together all nicely, and yet be laughing at each other all the time with that kind of a feeling underneath?"

"With what kind of a feeling, Miss Joyful?"

"With a kind of a despising feeling."

"Oh, Miss Joyful, don't put such an interpretation on it."

"I don't mind being laughed at when there is anything funny, you know, and no doubt there often is. Grandfather does it. But I would mind the other."

"Don't, don't, Miss Joyful. I could never have such a feeling toward you."

"Or toward any one else?"

"Out in the world there are often things that deserve such a feeling, but remember, we are n't there, and I shall never bring anything here that does n't belong here."

"Unless something calls it up."

Mark winced inwardly. "No, not if I can help it, even then. Now tell me how you could possibly think I was having such a feeling toward you."

"It is when you call me wise. I don't like it. It would be all right for me to call you wise. You have had a chance to become so — but — for me — you know it is impossible, so why should you say it? and when you do, how could you help feeling that way underneath?"

Mark smiled. He was on the point of saying, as before, "You are a wise little woman," but checked himself in time. "Miss Joyful, is n't there a place in the Bible — no doubt you

know it better than I — where the wisdom of wise men is called folly, and little children are called wise?"

"Yes." Her face lighted. "Is it something about things being hidden from the wise and being revealed unto babes? Very well. I am willing to be one of the babes — if that is what you mean."

"Joy, I calc'late 't we 'd better be startin' for home. How is it, Mr. Thorn, where 'bouts would you like us to leave you?"

"Oh, anywhere along here, Mr. Heatherby, where I shall be within walking distance from Woodbury Center."

"Well, I c'n put you off ten miles f'm there, 'r I c'n put you off five miles f'm there, 'r I c'n take you back to the cove 'nd give you a good supper, 'nd ye'd be two miles f'm ye'r boarding house."

"All right," Mark laughed. "I will return with you, but forego the supper, and walk through the woods to my boarding house, if that will suit you."

"That 'll suit me — only I don't intend to forego my supper; do you, Joy? I 'd a leetle rather put right back f'm here without stoppin' to land anywhere, f'r it 's blowin' up a leetle cold, 'nd it 'll be colder still 't sundown. Joy, had n't ye better put on ye'r bunnit?"

"I love to feel the breeze, grand-daddy. I 'm not a bit cold."

"Well, we 'll get back sooner 'n we came. I had to tack c'nsiderable to get out here at all. East wind; 't means rain to-morrow."

"Then I 'm glad we had our sail to-day," said Mark.

Mr. Heatherby shifted his sail and turned about, and then sat down to enjoy the quick run before the wind.

Mark drew out his book and began a sketch of the old man's head, as he sat opposite him at Joyful's side, while she, with pleased admiration, watched the likeness grow.

"I wish I could do that," she said.

"No doubt you could, after a while, if you tried." But she shook her head, and continued to watch in silence, while he chatted with her grandfather.

They were soon at the little pier where they sat and waited, while the old man took care of his boat, and Mark added a few finishing touches to the head he was penciling.

"Now, do you like it?" he said, holding it out to her.

"Oh, yes, yes! Can we show it to grandmother?"

He took his knife and carefully cut the leaf from the book.

"Would you like to have this?" he asked.

"Oh, Mr. Thorn, did you make it for me? Don't you want it yourself?"

"I made it for you, if you care for it. It does n't quite please me. I was too absent-minded. To make a really good likeness one must have complete concentration. One can't do it and be thinking of something else."

"But I am glad to have this, Mr. Thorn, and I think it was good of you to make it for me."

"And did I look in that objectionable way while I made it, Miss Joyful?"

"No, no! You did 'nt. Oh, I hope, Mr. Thorn, I have n't said — I am sorry I said —"

"Ah, but you have said, and I am glad you said — and I hope you will say again whatever you please to say, and never stop to think whether you shall or shall not. Miss Joyful, when you look at this, remember only the pleasant things about this sail, as I shall. And remember this also,

that you have helped me in my fight; will you? And so regret nothing you may think you have said, and be glad. I may leave this place in a few days, and I may stay long, but I will never forget." He looked pleasantly into her face, and their eyes met.

"Thank you, I will. I don't quite understand all — I wish I did — but I will try to believe what you say."

"No, you may not quite understand. You could n't, without having been out there — as you call it, and I am glad you have not."

"What ye got, Joy?" said the old man, coming up and looking over Joyful's shoulder. "Well, well, well! Caught on the fly, so to speak." He took out his glasses and carefully adjusted them. "Now give it to me and we'll have a look at it and then pass criticism. Well, well! That's Grand-daddy Heatherby, wrinkles and all."

"Oh, Grandfather! Be careful. Don't let the wind blow it away. It's mine, Grandfather."

"Your grandfather? Course it is. Who said it wan't?"

They walked slowly across the sands and up the crooked little path. At the top of the bluff, Mark removed his hat, and looked off on the sea. Thin clouds were rolling over the edge of the horizon. Their pleasant day was past. The sun was making gold the sky behind the dark woods, as they took their way through the pasture lot, and subtle, sweet odors of spring floated about them. A pink mist of crab-apple blossoms hung on the edge of the wood, and a bird note sweetened the stillness. A spell of witchery seemed over them, and over the world. They did not speak, but walked up the long slope in silence. Joyful swung her bonnet in her hand, and her rapt face bore no cloud. Her

glorious color, half-smiling lips, and clear eyes — lighted from within — and the old man's cordial grasp of the hand as they parted at the gate, left a pleasant feeling around Mark Thorn's heart as he walked away.

"You'll bear us in mind, and look in on us sometimes," said Mr. Heatherby, and Mark was glad.

"This is certainly a charmed spot," he said to himself, as he took his way through the darkening lane.

CHAPTER V

MIXED EMOTIONS

"Like as a ship, that through the ocean wyde
Directs her course unto one certaine cost,
It met of many a counter wynde and tyde,
With which her winged speed is let and crost,
And she herselfe in stormie surges tost;
Yet making many a borde and many a bay,
Still winneth way, ne hath her compasse lost;
Right so it fares with me in this long way
Whose course is often stayed, yet never is astray."

—*The Faerie Queene.*

THAT evening, by the light of a lamp, Mark removed a portion of the things from his trunk, whistling softly as he worked; and soon had reduced his painfully neat apartment to a scene of the wildest disorder. Poor Mrs. Somers' hair would have untwisted itself from its tight knot and stood on end with horror, could she have looked in on him, as he rose and stood amid the confusion with evident satisfaction.

"There!" he exclaimed, "I feel more at home." He kicked a pair of riding boots under the bed. "They may as well lie there. I sha'n't ride much here," he said.

At last he took up a piece of board and opening a box of dusty pastels began to lay in a girl's head, working very slowly, and keeping up the continuous low whistle. "I'll try monochrome first and use color later," he thought.

Two little lines formed between his eyes, and creased deeply into his forehead, and the shadows of the lamp light made them look deeper still. Now and again he placed the board in the light, leaning against the glass of the bureau, and walked back — softly whistling — when the lines in his forehead smoothed themselves and the brows lifted; now and again they would form and the brows fall as he worked and whistled, and the face grew dreamily like the one he had been studying all the afternoon.

Suddenly a harsh clangor crashed through the room. "For Heaven's sake! I didn't know I was directly over that awful piano." The strains of "Affection's Offering Waltz" were tumultuously reverberating through the little parlor and pervading the halls and Mark's room with triumphant assertiveness. Mr. Somers was right. "Jane could play the piano like a steam engine."

Mark turned his drawing to the wall, hastily dusted the crayon from his hands, using his one towel for the purpose, and making it look as if he had wiped all the complexion from a full-blooded African on its knotty surface, snatched up his hat, and left the place. The air was chill, and buttoning his coat to the chin, he thrust his hands deep in its pockets and strode rapidly away. He would get out of reach of the sound of that piano, if he had to take Heatherby's boat and put out to sea.

Rapt in thought, he walked aimlessly, taking little note of direction. The streets of the village were dimly lighted. Now and then people passed him like shadows in dreams. Presently the notes of a hymn sung by several voices came to him, sounding sweetly through the darkness, and simultaneously an echo of the words he had heard at Elizabeth

Drew's door in the early morning—"Will you be at choir practice this evening? Joyful says she will be there." Unconsciously he quickened his steps in the direction from which the sound came.

He remembered June Somers' remark at the supper table, that "The 'piscopals were going to have service that evening, 't she believed they was more 'n half Cath'lic anyway, with their Saints' days 'nd all," and that "Joyful Heatherby would surely be there, she bein' so dreadfully religious, her ma's father bein' a 'piscopal minister, 'nd all," and that "that Than Stoddard would be there too, so 't he could see her home."

Mrs. Somers had opined that, "If Than Stoddard kep' on doin's he been doin' 't Elizabeth Drew 'd be wearin' mournin' 'fore the summer was over." And Mr. Somers had remarked that, "He see Jack Stoddard talkin' with his brother over in their father's north field 's he drove home from Willoughby Junction that afternoon, 'nd he guessed mebby he 'd come home now to stay 'nd behave himself 'nd help Than out 's he 'd ought to, 'nd more 'n likely he 'd have somethin' to say 'bout who sh'd see Joy Heatherby home."

So, pleasantly interested and amused at this lifting of the curtain upon the drama of the village stage, Mark joined the company of the devout ones, and entered the little church. He seated himself in one of the pews and looked quietly about. Of the dramatis personæ only the radiant young woman he had seen talking with Nathanael in the morning appeared. Evidently she had decided to come after all. She sat quite still, with her head slightly bowed and her profile toward him, before the small pipe organ built in at one side of the chancel. Her hair glowed

warmly in the light thrown on it from the reflector lamp above her. As his eyes grew used to the dimness, he saw Nathanael, in the black garb of the choir, seated in the shadow, with his eyes fixed on her face. "Mrs. Somers makes a mistake," thought Mark. But where was Joyful? Looking again about the church, he felt a distinct sense of disappointment at not seeing her.

It was early. The choir had ceased their practice, and there was a hush of waiting as the small number of worshippers gathered. A young man sauntered in and dropped into a pew across the aisle from him. Mark saw Nathanael glance that way and move uneasily in his seat. Then a small pointed door on the farther side was pushed open from within, and four young women in black capes and flat caps entered and moved to their seats near the organ. Joyful was one of them. She looked up and exchanged a smile with the organist, who passed her a hymn book open. The rays of the same light that glowed on Elizabeth's hair shone on her face, and she looked out over the church with much the same expression in her eyes as when she was gazing on the sea. Suddenly a flash of recognition lightened them, and a wave of color swept over her face, as she dropped her glance quickly upon her open book, and Mark saw the young man across the aisle gazing at her; but she did not once again look out over the congregation. Studying thus the faces of those in whom he had so newly become interested, the short service was ended ere he was aware, and people began moving past him.

Mark loitered, hoping to exchange greetings with Nathanael, and the young man across the aisle loitered also, walking down the side toward the choir seats. When Joy-

ful appeared, Mark saw him greet her warmly and possess himself of her hymn book and shawl. She turned and waited for Elizabeth and Nathanael to join them, and then the rector came from the vestry, walking with a quick step. As Joyful and the young man passed Mark, she did not guess whose eyes scanned her face. She was listening to the rapid speech of the man at her side. Nathanael followed, and as Mark bade him "Good evening," he looked up with pleasant recognition, and asked him how he liked his quarters, and introduced him to the rector, who in turn repeated his name to his wife and Elizabeth. A few kindly words were exchanged between them, and inquiries made regarding his stay, the rector hoping he might see him often, and they all passed out together.

As Mark walked on in the darkness he saw Joyful and her companion lingering, and heard Nathanael say, "Waiting, Jack?" and Jack's reply, "Yes, Than, I'll take the girls home. You need n't trouble yourself." "You'd better put that shawl around Joy. The night's chilly, Jack," he heard Nathanael say, and saw him take Elizabeth's arm. Then the four walked off together.

Mark sauntered slowly homeward, thinking -- thinking. He felt that he was ever pondering and getting nowhere these days. "'Stop trifling, Mark, and go to work,'" he said to himself. "Well, I suppose Louise knows what she means; I don't. This dreaming and striving -- is it trifling? When I taught, she said I was trifling away my time; now that I have given up my position, she thinks I'm trifling more than ever. If I took up some vagary in art and carried it to an extreme until the startled world should cry my name from the housetops, she might call that success.

My picture of dawn, the only thing she ever praised, the poorest thing I ever hung on a wall, all one purple blotch — she liked it because it attracted attention. There was always a crowd around it, wondering what on earth the artist meant by it, when he did n't know himself — God help him — pretending to admire it because they could n't understand it — but — pity their souls! no doubt it's human to like mystery and run in herds. The little girl was right. Louise loves power." He found himself laughing alone out there in the darkness. "I would give a hundred dollars if Louise could have heard that, 'So cold she could walk through fire and not be burned' — no, nor melted, either. But she is — I declare it — she's a glorious creature. And there it is. I must take up with some kind of a fad, and make a hit. — Nothing short of the homage of the whole world will content her. But she's worth it. She's a magnificent being.

"'Mark Thorn, work for art alone. Pay no attention to the critics — they don't know anything. First, last, always be an artist.' Very well, that's not bad — no, it's the only thing. He knew what I needed, that old teacher of mine. And then my blessed mother's last words: 'Mark, never degrade your talents by pandering to an unworthy motive. Be true to the best that is in you, my son. Be true to your God. Be true to my hopes of you, Mark.' My God, what a mother she was! If she were with me, I could hold out; but I declare, I'm discouraged. 'Stop trifling, get to work' — am I not always working? — 'and bring the world to your feet.' That's it. The world, the world, always the world. And my reward? I should have the queen of Joyful's dream picture to be mine. Ah, it's

worth striving for — yes — if, when all 's done, she does n't toss me over for some new whim."

When he reached Mrs. Somers' the piano was still. The lamp burned in his room as he had left it. He sat himself down, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, and his head drooped upon his breast. His lank form stretched half across the room and his feet rested upon the articles he had thrown from his trunk. Soon he roused himself, and taking up his drawing, set it in the light where Joyful's dreamy eyes looked out at him from an indiscriminate mist. "I'll make this as ideal as possible. I can't make it more so than she is," he said. Then he thought of Elizabeth Drew's head glowing out of the obscurity, and decided to become a regular attendant at evening service until he had it, and grimly wondered how Louise would like it if he made a specialty of red-headed girls.

The particular red-headed girl in question was just bidding Nathanael good-bye at her own door. "I'm glad you have decided as you have," she was saying.

"And I'm glad you did n't hold to your determination not to go out this evening. I needed this talk with you. I suppose there 's never a moment when, somewhere on this earth, some woman is not doing some man or other good. That seems the way the best of us are made to be worth being."

"Nathanael!" Elizabeth put out her hand and touched, very lightly, the sleeve of his coat. It was an involuntary movement, prompted by a loving impulse, and as poplar leaves quiver to the lightest breath, so every nerve of his being responded to the touch.

He restrained himself from taking the hand in his. What

had he for her? He, whose life had been spent for others, had nothing to offer the woman he loved. So he stood, awkwardly waiting for her to continue, and as she searched for just the word she wanted, he bent and kissed the fascinating little combination of ribbon and lace she wore upon her head, while she spoke on, unaware of the secret homage.

"Nathanael, I believe I'll scold you a little."

"That's a fearful threat. I think I'll run." But instead he folded his arms and leaned against the door post.

"Don't disparage yourself. I can't believe it is right. I admit Jack's a brilliant chap, but does that in any way militate against you? I think self-depreciation is a hindrance to a man. It gives him a faint heart. It makes him shrink backward when he ought to be pressing forward. I declare I will not hear you tell of what Jack is and what he can do. Can't you see that is neither here nor there, as far as you are concerned?"

"Can't I see? Yes, Elizabeth, yes, go on."

"Oh, that's all. I just want you to think highly of yourself. You have certain God-given power — every man has, in some degree — but you more than many, and because it is God-given you have no right to belittle it — no man has. To depreciate one's self takes the buoyancy out of life. To feel competent is to feel strong. Good night."

She gave him her hand, and he held it an instant closed warmly in his, but again the words that rose to his lips from his inmost heart he would not let himself utter, so he spoke lamely other words. "You are right, I know it, yet it's — it's easier for a man to work for some one else than for himself — it's more inspiring — I mean it seems less —"

"Oh, you great good fellow, you, go along! If I could

only see your self-esteem rise up and dominate your other faculties — Nathanael, take my advice. Harrow and cultivate your bump of self-esteem during this summer and see what a crop you can raise."

He laughed. "No need now, Elizabeth; you have sowed the seed, and have harrowed it well in. Some day you'll have to reap the crop in retribution. I'm already beginning to feel the effects. It's very pleasant for a man to have his self-esteem flattered, — I wish we had gone on to the end of the road with Joyful and my brother. He would n't have been so pleased with our company, though. Did you hear him dismiss me at the church door?" He gave another little laugh and paused, then continued, "I'm troubled about them, especially about Joy; Jack can take care of himself. Can't you help me?"

Her whole figure became tense, but in the dusk he did not see. "How are you troubled? I don't quite comprehend."

"I started to tell you this morning, but did n't. It's hard to compromise my own brother, but the truth is, I almost wish he had n't come home before sailing."

Elizabeth thought she understood, but held her peace. "He is afraid his brother will win her away from him," she thought. "He might say what he had to say." This time she would not help him.

"Joy is such a child yet —" he paused, and Elizabeth let him stumble on, "although in a way she is older than her years. I — I — have taken pains to see something of her of late, because — because — it seemed best — since you were not here to — to play older sister to her as you have always done. You see she should be saved from any

entanglement — until — she has seen more of the world — even if it may cut across Jack's plans."

"Have you any reason to know what Jack's plans are?" she said coldly.

"He has n't chosen me for his confidant." She stood silent. "Elizabeth, can't you see how it is? I don't want to speak against my brother — women are intuitive, and you — you are superior to us here; we have always looked up to you — I have — and to Joy you are everything. You can save her from any impetuous rashness — you understand."

"I think I do." She spoke slowly. "But you overrate my power;" she gave a short laugh. "And instead of looking up to me, have you forgotten the time you used to laugh at me because I could n't leap over the brook, and you could? Yes, I understand. I'll do all I can — it may not be much — for your sake." Again she said good night and turned away.

"No, no. It's for her sake, for hers alone. Please remember that," he cried and walked away with a distinct sense of discomfiture, yet wondering in his big, innocent heart, why, while Elizabeth was saying to herself: —

"I do believe the best of men can't be quite honest with themselves, or any one else, when it comes to matters of this kind. Does he think I am in love with him that he must try to cover the truth from me? Humph! Men are conceited, every one of them. For her sake alone!"

She forgot the lecture she had just given him. She tossed the bonnet he had kissed on the table, dropped her gloves in a chair, took up the lamp which had been left burning for her, and went to her room.

Nathanael was quite right in supposing Jack to have had

enough of his company. He considered Joyful as his especial property, by what right he could scarcely have told, other than that a child has to everything that strikes its fancy, from its brother's stick of candy to the moon in the sky, could he manage to snatch the one or pull down the other. Drawing her hand through his arm he swung bravely off with her into the darkness, plunging into a rapid flow of talk of his own plans and affairs.

"You see, Joy, Than's an awfully fine fellow, but he's a bit slow. He needs a college education to get anywhere; but for me, I can't wait. I mean to be rich. I can't spend half my life plodding along here in New England over Greek and Latin. New England isn't any bigger 'n your thumb nail, compared with the rest of the world. You can't know anything about it, shut up here in this cove, like a canary bird in a cage."

But Joyful had grown suddenly older since she had seen Jack last. She had many ideas floating through her girlish brain, vague, to be sure, yet forming the nebulae of true wisdom. Her resentment of his attitude toward her, and her instinctive perception of the difference between Jack and Mark Thorn and Nathanael were part of this very nebulae of spiritually discovered truth. She knew that out in the world the dragons and monsters of the deep that Mark Thorn was contending with would never even be perceived by Jack to have an existence. Nathanael might see them, but never Jack. His monsters would be grosser, perhaps, but less subtle and harder to kill.

However, her joyous, wholesome nature remained as yet undisturbed by these vague stirrings within her, and Jack was certainly a handsome fellow who had played with her

and domineered over her and patronized her after his big-boy fashion all her life. She was used to his tyranny, and he to her little resentments and whirlwinds and scoffings. Her wit had ever been too much for him, but he could always soothe his feelings with the thought that she gloried in his strength, and he, after all, was her superior, and could have his own way with her when he chose, and by rights should have it.

"I'm going to get rich, Joy. A man is n't anything in this world without money. Let me see. How long is it since I saw you last? Ten months, and I've cleared — just you guess how much I've cleared since that time."

"How can I? I don't even know what you were doing."

"Well, never mind, just you guess, that's a good girl."

"Why, you cleared — you cleared out, I know that much, and when you wrote home you cleared away a great big cloud of trouble about you; I know that much more, and what else you cleared you must tell me."

"Joy, I made five hundred dollars the first trip. Think of that, the first go-off! Oh, I'm safe enough. Next time I'll do better, because —"

"Jack! That's fine! Now you can pay Nathanael back part of the money, can't you?"

Jack winced. "Has Than been talking to you about it?" he asked pettishly.

"You know he would n't do that! You told me yourself. Don't you remember?"

"Oh yes, of course; well it's hard for girls to understand about money matters, but you see, Joy, if I pay this out, I sha' n't have any for investment next trip."

"Oh. Where did you get the money for the first?"

"Borrowed that, of course, but that's all straight, and now I can make more, not having to borrow again. See?"

"Yes, Jack, — but —"

"Look here, Joy. Than knows how 'tis. He's an awfully good fellow."

"Don't I know that? Everybody does. But he — he needs —"

"Don't you worry. He knows he's all right with me; we understand each other." He felt her hand slipping from his arm, and he seized it and held it there. "Why, I expect to help him through yet, more 'n likely. Did n't I tell you I left college just not to be a drag on him?"

She pulled her hand from his grasp. "Don't hold on to me like that, Jack. I like to swing my arms. You said so, yes — but —"

"You are n't half glad to see me back after all this time. Why do you pull away and keep saying, 'Yes — but —'?" He seized her hand again and drew it through his arm firmly.

She laughed out merrily. "You act just as you used to when you were a boy, and think what I want does n't count. Of course I'm glad to see you, Jack, — but —"

"There you go again, butting away like a little goat. I really thought you would be proud of me. What's the matter?"

"Jack, you shall let go of my hand, and I will swing my arms, and walk by myself. As if I had n't walked this road hundreds of times oftener than you, that I need to be helped along like a baby! And Jack, sir, I'm not a little girl any longer, I'm a woman now, and must 'put away childish things.' Grandmother says so."

"Whew! All the girls I know take a turn at being young

ladies before they get to be women. You must have skipped that stage. Ladies don't go stamping along swinging their arms and quarreling." He laughed, and again caught her hand and drew her back, walking close beside her as before. "Don't you know, Joy, you belong to me, and we are sweethearts? There, don't struggle and twist, and stamp your foot like a little wildcat; just listen now."

She laughed at him then, but stopped struggling. Although vexed, she could not help responding to the domination he had always exercised over her; but after a bit she grew grave and then gave a little, gentle sigh. She was thinking of the difference between Jack and Mr. Thorn, and although she tried in her loyal heart to frame excuses for him, the comparison was not good for the man at her side. Mark's tacit comprehension of her moods pleased her. Jack never had understood. He talked on and on, telling of his hopes and plans, and presently she laughed out again.

"What are you laughing at, Joy?"

"At you."

"Why, what have I said now?" he asked indignantly.

"You said a minute ago that I stamped my foot like a wildcat. Did you ever see one that stamped its foot, and looked like a little goat, and a canary bird in a cage? You see how silly you are. Then you say I'm not a lady, and now you say we are sweethearts. I would n't have such a sweetheart, if I were you. And then you said I ought to be proud of you, just as if I were your mother and had brought you up. Aren't you silly?"

"It's your own fault, Joy. You change from one thing to another, like the witches they used to burn in the old

days. Here I've come back just to have a good talk with you, and you find fault and laugh at me."

She relented a little at his injured tone. "Then don't talk about being sweethearts, Jack, and I'll listen. I am glad you came back, most of all for your father's sake and Nathanael's."

"Seems to me everything's Than to-night. Anybody'd think you thought the world 'n all of Than."

"I do. Isn't he about the best man you ever knew?"

"See here, Joy, has Than been makin' up to you since I've been gone?"

"You mustn't talk that way. I don't like it."

He dropped her hand and moved away from her. "There, go your own way, and swing your arms, if you want to."

"I don't. I want to walk with you like this." She slipped her hand again through his arm. "But you mustn't talk about people making up to me. It doesn't sound nice."

"Now, Joy, here we are at your home, and you have n't even said yet that you think I have done well, and I am doing it all for you. You are to be my little wife, Joy, and —"

She drew quickly away again. "Jack! I've never said that to you, and you know it."

"Ah, but you will, Joy? I've always meant that, you know." He came close to her side again and bent over her.

"Oh, Jack! Let things be in the old way. I liked it a great deal better so."

"I can't, and I don't like it better so. See here. I've got to go away in a week, and be gone a long time, and some

one may come and take you away from me. You're growing up, and how can things stay as they were?"

"I shall stay right here, and take care of grandfather and grandmother, and no one shall take me away from them, not even you, Jack."

"But you do love me — now don't you, Joy?"

"Of course I do, but I don't have to marry every one I love."

He stooped suddenly and kissed her, and something in his manner made her tremble. She darted from him through the gate, and shut it quickly between them.

"Why, what's the matter, Joy?" He reached over the little wicket barrier and held her there.

"Jack!" she said, in a low voice, "I'm not ready to say, yet. Let me go. You mustn't do this way."

"I'm coming to see you to-morrow, Joy, and you can say it then."

"I'll not say it — not for years — not to any one. Let me go, Jack, it's late, and — and — you mustn't kiss me again, Jack, that way, ever."

"But you do love me, Joy?" he still pleaded.

"Yes, better, more'n likely, than you do me, if there were any way of measuring love, so that's all. Now let me go. Good night."

"Joy, Joy. Wait a minute. Listen," he cried, as she escaped from his grasp and ran up the path.

"No, no. Not now, Jack. Good night."

"Oh, Joy! To-morrow, then, Joy." But she was gone, and there was nothing for him to do but to take his way home in the darkness.

CHAPTER VI

JOYFUL'S LADYE FAIRE

"A lovely ladie rode him faire beside,
Upon a lowly asse more white than snowe;
Yet she much whiter; but the same did hide
Under a vele, that wimpled was full low."

— *The Faerie Queene*.

THE next morning was sullen and cloudy, but the weather had no effect on Joyful's gay spirits. As blithe as the birds, she sang as she clattered the milk pans, and chattered, now to her grandmother in the kitchen, now to the cat, and now to the hens in the yard that threatened to scratch out all the wild things in the small corner where she had set them.

She had cried a little the night before, as she confided to her pillow that Jack was too bad to spoil all their good times by getting such silly notions in his head. She had cried harder still when she thought how she wished her mother was there. She could tell her all about it — she could n't tell her grandmother.

But this morning she was happy. She was to spend the day with Elizabeth, who had said she had something pleasant for her to do, so she gayly sang, and hurried about her work, so as to walk over before the rain began.

"I'll be back before dark, grandmother, so don't worry, and don't take the trouble to send for me."

"Take the umbrel', Joy, 'nd wear your rubbers. It 'll be raining by evening, more 'n likely."

As Joyful walked through the woods that spring morning, her thoughts recurred to her companion of the evening before. "He thinks I must do whatever he wants, whether I wish it or not." Then she laughed. "He may stay and visit with grandmother, if he comes to-day. I sha'n't stay at home for him. He may hunt me up, if he wants to see me so badly." Then she wondered, "What would Elizabeth say if she knew!" and her heart gave a quick, uncertain beat at the thought of the kiss he had given her.

Elizabeth was scanning a magazine of the fashions to find a simple and becoming style in which to shape the pink dimity with which it was her intention to adorn Joyful for him she believed to be her lover. Her self-sacrifice was to be absolute and loving, and when she heard the gate swing to with a sharp click, she came and met the child halfway down the path and took her into her large, whole-souled embrace.

"You are so sweet and warm, Ladye Faire," said Joyful, kissing her, and at the same moment she thought again of Jack's kiss, and glanced in Elizabeth's face with an almost guilty feeling. Not for the world would she have her know what Jack had said and done, in her sweet, innocent shame. But soon the reckless Jack was forgotten, and she was trying on the pink dimity, and gazing with delighted eyes on the lace and ribbon trimmed muslin that was to be transformed into a maidenly gown for her summer's best.

"Oh, Ladye Faire, how dear you are, and how good to me!"

"You can do most of the work on these yourself, Joy. The pink one needs very little change. Who would have thought her so near my size, mother?"

"Thee is growing a great girl, Joyful," said Mrs. Drew. "Bring me the white one; I will take off the ribbon for thee."

So the two women shaped and cut, and Joyful chattered and sewed industriously, that rainy morning. The mild air was full of sweet spring odors, and they sat on the porch under the overhanging, vine-covered roof. A pair of blue-birds were creating their summer home under one corner of the porch eaves. The male, in his bright blue coat, sat on the tip of the pear tree and sang about it joyously, while his plain little wife did the work.

Sometimes, for a moment, the clouds would break, and the sunlight stream through the budding, rain-jeweled vines, scattering splashes of gold over Elizabeth and Joyful, their work, and the porch floor; then again the world would grow dark while low rumbles of thunder jarred the earth with mysterious quakings. During one of these threatening moments, just as a heavy dash of rain began pelting down, Mark Thorn appeared before the gate. Elizabeth had gone within, and was running over some new music, while Joyful, in the great rocker outside, sat with hands clasped behind her head, listening.

"Oh, don't go by, Mr. Thorn, come in out of the rain," called Joyful, impulsively.

"Thank you, I will, gladly — if I may." He swung rapidly up the path and in an instant was under the sheltering roof, shaking the raindrops from his coat. The blue-birds dashed out from the eaves with frightened whirl as he loomed up tall and dark beneath them. He could have placed his hand in the nest from where he stood. "Poor little things. Now I have frightened them," he said,

placing his color box and easel back against the wall and dropping into a chair.

Elizabeth came out, and he rose. She remembered him, and spoke pleasantly. At the instant a peal of thunder crashed overhead, and the rain came down in a flood. Then Mrs. Drew's voice called from within, "Would n't thee better all sit inside, daughter? It will be chilly there." And thus was Mark Thorn introduced into that peaceful house.

After that the clouds closed down heavily, and the steady rainfall held him a glad prisoner. They could not do other than urge him to remain to the noon meal, and although he protested a spring drenching would do him no harm, he could do no other than to accept and partake with pleased complaisance.

Mrs. Drew was one of those flowerlike elderly women whom young men always admire, to whom they love to pay their homage. With gentle deference he showed her the few sketches he had in his box, and he talked of art and artists, of music and musicians, while Elizabeth, with cheerful composure, continued her loving labor, cutting and planning, joining now and then in the conversation; and Joyful, listening with wide eyes and parted lips, silently sewed on. Again the world seemed to her awakening soul to be growing larger, and her horizon line wider and farther away.

Often had she listened to the chat of Mrs. Drew and Elizabeth, but to-day a new element was introduced. Mark Thorn had come to them with news of men and women of his world, men and women who were living and working, and helping to mold the taste and sentiment of

the day in art and letters. He had quaint tales to tell of these — intimate tales of their ways, their eccentricities and humors.

Joyful's lore was all of the past, gathered from the books stored in that closet in her grandfather's cottage. She had a host of friends and acquaintances, all shadowy spirits who had lived first in the brains of poets and romancers of a bygone time, but very real to her. She held the creators of these beings in holy reverence, never dreaming that their like existed at the present day. Elizabeth had told her of Wagner and the German folklore he had embodied in his music. The tales of the "Nibelungenlied" and "Tannhäuser" she knew well, and had taken the myths into her romantic little soul, having her own personal loves among them; though not of this world, nor of the present day, they lived in her guileless heart and brain. The "Gentle Knight" and "Ladye Faire" of Spenser's "Faerie Queene" and Chaucer's "Pilgrims" were her friends, and the little "Sisterkin" and "Gold Green Snakes" of Jean Paul Richter, she saw them in the sunset-gleaming ripples round her grandfather's boat, or in the long moonlit path on the sea on a calm summer evening. Oh, yes. She knew them all. She had read of "Undine" and "Graziella" in her mother's subtle French tongue.

Of the world's sin and suffering she had a strange, unworldly knowledge, and her spiritual high lights were so pure and clear they would have dazzled into blindness the conventional, near-sighted vision of ordinarily fed, starveling mortals, started in life from the public schools of our land. They might repeat the names of all the deities of the Norsemen, or the Greeks and Egyptians, a meaningless

list, drearily droned over, but could they have looked on the furnishings of Joyful's mind, they would have found these beings seated on thrones of light, or riding the clouds at sunset, or driving before the blast on a winter's night.

Now, listening this rainy day with eager interest to Mark Thorn's easy flow of talk, the modern and the old began to mix, in her half child's, half woman's consciousness, in a vague jumble of ideas, wherein the realities of the present seemed as visions which another day's experiences might sweep away, while the unrealities of her childish thoughts were the very foundation of things to her, on which she was building her present.

Elizabeth's musical advantages had been of the best, yet she had withal a quaint way of rendering simple things quite personal to herself. Mark soon discovered this unique charm, and led her on to play for him, with unconcealed delight.

"I'm glad," he said, "that your German education has n't made you Germanesque. You treat your instrument as if it were a sentient being."

Elizabeth smiled. "I always do have that feeling, as if my piano were a creature that could suffer or be responsive to moods, and almost forget that it's a mere piece of mechanism."

Joyful had been so silent, in her corner by the window, that they had ceased to be aware of her presence. Now she laughed out with a merry note that made them all smile.

"What is thee laughing at, child? Tell thy thoughts," said Mrs. Drew.

"I was thinking how easy it would be for Ladye Faire to become an old heathen."

"How so?" said Elizabeth, taking her work from her. "Come, to pay for that you must recite to us. An old heathen, indeed! Joyful recites French very prettily," she added, turning to Mark.

"Do, Miss Joyful, but explain first, how would your friend be an old heathen?"

"I mean she could be. Did n't they make statues and build shrines, and then think those stone things were spirits, or had spirits in them, and worship them? Ladye Faire thinks her piano has a soul in it. I can imagine her kneeling and holding her hands up this way before it as the peasants do before the shrines of the Blessed Virgin in France."

"You naughty girl," said Elizabeth, laughing. "What do you know about them?"

"I have pictures of them in my books, that mother used to tell me about. Mr. Thorn, you said yesterday you'd let me see you work sometime. Won't you make a picture of Elizabeth, while I look on? Your paints are here; I saw them when you opened your box."

"Gladly I will." He turned to Elizabeth. "I promised Miss Joyful she might see me lay in a head sometime. Do you mind? We may not have a better chance, and the light is good."

"I have no objection, certainly — only I would prefer you made mother your model, so I could watch you, too."

"I'll tell you what I'd do if I were an artist, Mr. Thorn. I'd make Elizabeth all in a white robe, simply dressed, like the lovely 'Ladye Faire' who rode on a white palfrey with the 'Gentle Knight' who was pricking o'er the plain." They all laughed. "I don't see anything funny in that."

"There is n't, Miss Joyful; but who was your lovely ladye?"

"She means the Lady Una in Spenser's 'Faerie Queene.' She has a silly way of calling me that." Elizabeth stroked Joyful's hair lovingly. "Come, child — come, recite 'L'Hirondelle' for us, while Mr. Thorn gets his things ready."

"I know your lovely 'Ladye Faire' on the white palfrey now, Miss Joyful, only for a moment I did not think of her. See, while I take out my colors, you repeat the poem, and then you may have all the say about this picture. I'll make it just as you wish it, if Miss Drew will be patient with us."

"Oh, she will," said Joyful, with confidence. Then she repeated with a delightful accent the little poem in French which Elizabeth had asked for.

Mark smiled as he thought how completely he had forgotten he was in an isolated little New England village several miles from any railroad and from all city advantage. Here, where farming and fishing were the only occupations, combined with storekeeping and exceedingly primitive carpentering, enough to supply the limited needs of the place, the atmosphere of this home seemed for the moment quite incongruous, as he listened to the little maid recite her French, and felt the inspiration of Elizabeth's music and the charm of Mrs. Drew's high-bred voice and manner. They seemed like stars shot out of another sphere into a queer little drowsy, workaday, gossiping world. As he thought of this, only Nathanael alone seemed to stand out from among the rest as kindred in spirit to these, he and grandfather and grandmother Heatherby.

Thus, as Mark worked, his mind was busied with other matters than his paints and brushes, vaguely wondering what Joyful was destined to become. If these should be taken from her, what would the child do, doubly isolated, both by her nature and rearing from those around her? What did she do in the long New England winters with only those two old people, when Elizabeth and her mother were not there? To be sure, he had seen her singing in the choir of the little church — there might be others who were interested in her; but his moment's speech with the rector and his wife had shown him that their interest would be of the most perfunctory and conventional sort. He was certain they would have as little comprehension of the child's nature as would the church steeple. And Mark, in his genuine, kindly sympathy was right. Although Joyful, with her imaginative mind, was never lonely, even when most alone, yet, were she thrown out of her safe little anchorage here, as she must inevitably be sometime, what would the cruel old world do with her, or rather, what would she do with it?

Mark remembered the tearful glance she threw at her old grandfather, when they sat in the boat, as she spoke of wishing to do something real, something that would last. Could it be that premonitions of the future were already troubling her?

"Now, Miss Joyful — " he said, holding his sketch block at arm's length. "Come here and show me how you want this." He glanced at Elizabeth, as she sat before the piano.

"Oh, but I wouldn't like this dark dress, would you? I think she was dressed all in white under her mantle, and a long sleeve hanging down."

"No doubt you are right, Miss Joyful."

Elizabeth laughed. "You shall have anything you like, child. You've worked steadily enough; we'll put the sewing all by and play awhile. What shall I put on?"

Joyful clasped her hands rapturously. "Oh, put on the white tableau dress you wore in the pictures for the Church. You know —"

So Elizabeth obediently went and returned in the "white tableau dress," as Joyful called it, and Mark was satisfied. She looked, indeed, a veritable "Una," such as might that moment have stepped, in red and white English beauty, from the old poet's brain.

"Look, Mr. Thorn, I said she was the 'Ladye Faire,'" cried the child.

"Joyful has a definite picture of every one of her heroes and heroines. I warn you, she will be a hard taskmistress. Now, how shall I sit; this way?"

"Oh, no. She must sit sideways, so we can see her hair, with that twisty way it has, and look down — but — Oh, dear!"

"Why, that's all right, certainly, side view, and looking down; what's the trouble? Why the 'Oh, dear'?"

"Why, Una had something all over her, a 'Vele that wimpled was full low.' We can't paint her that way. We can see under the veil and how fair she was, in thinking, but we can't paint under it."

"Why need we?" said Mark, greatly amused. "We can get around that, — pretend she had thrown it back because it was so warm, while the 'Gentle Knight' was riding on before, and didn't see her."

"Ah, yes," said Joyful, delightedly, "and it would float

out in the breeze, and all her hair would show. Is n't her hair very beautiful, Mr. Thorn?"

Elizabeth reddened. "You must n't make any comments, Joyful, or I sha' n't sit for you. That 's not fair."

"Indeed, you 're right. My brush can never do it justice, Miss Joyful. Now look. We'll take just the head, so. Is that what you wish?"

"Yes. You would n't have room for a palfrey on that small block. Oh! Is that the way you do it?" she cried, catching her breath in dismay, as she saw him lay on large masses of color with a free hand. She feared lest he spoil it in the very beginning.

"Don't be afraid. I'm not going to leave it this way. Just be patient, and watch."

That was a happy day for the little maid. She could not remember when she had been so happy.

Mark worked with earnest gravity. He was pleased both with his model and his mood, and the rare good fortune that had brought him this opportunity; and when the clouds scattered, revealing a glorious sunset, he had before him a sketch which appeared to him almost inspirational. As he stepped back at last and looked at it, he realized that he had excelled himself at his best, and he felt a reverence both for his model and his work. The lines of his face settled into a seriousness that was almost stern, but he said nothing. Elizabeth rose and came to his side. "May I see it now?" she asked.

Mark's face relaxed into a smile. "I beg your pardon. I had forgotten that any one might be interested in this besides myself, Miss Drew — That is, well, we artists are an audacious set of fellows; we have to be, to succeed;

and now, I have a favor to ask of you, almost as soon as we have met."

"Certainly, Mr. Thorn; what is it?"

"This picture, that was begun in a moment of pastime, I wish to take in earnest. I've been searching for just this type of head for a year. It is a mural painting for a music hall, of the symbolic order, and in the classic style, and it has been at a standstill for months, waiting for me to find the model and be in the mood to finish the work. This head, why, it's absolutely —"

"Oh, Mr. Thorn! How can you possibly use my tip-tilted nose in a classic?"

"That's nothing. What is the tip of a nose, more or less? See here," he seized his brush and bent to the work again. Joyful sprang forward and caught his arm.

"Don't touch it, please, Mr. Thorn. Mrs. Drew, must n't he leave it as it is?"

"Why, that's so. This is your picture, after all. It was promised to you."

"Thee is too impulsive, Joyful," said Mrs. Drew, quietly.

"Of course I'm only asking to be allowed to use this head as a study. The likeness may be disguised in the larger picture, if you so wish, Miss Drew; and then, Miss Joyful, I will return the drawing to you as it is, untouched."

The girl stood back, abashed by her own rashness, and Mrs. Drew's rebuke. Her eyes glistened with a suspicion of tears held back, as she looked up at Mark. "I'm sorry," she said; "but don't you think the lady on the white palfrey may have had a nose that turned up a little bit like that? She was English, you know, and English girls' noses aren't all straight like a Greek statue's."

They all laughed merrily, while one little tear escaped from Joyful's drooping lashes. Mrs. Drew reached out and patted the child's hand.

"Don't worry thyself, dear. Thee has done no harm, and after all the picture is thine, and the day may come when it will be thy greatest possession; thee cannot tell. Mr. Thorn may yet become one of the world's wonderful artists, such as he was telling us of at dinner."

"Oh, I think he is now — or he never could have done this," she cried joyfully. She turned and raised her eyes to his. "Could you, Mr. Thorn?"

Mark could not answer lightly under the weight of that look. "No artist is great or wonderful in himself alone, Miss Joyful. They all need help, even the greatest. You remember what I told you yesterday? They must have ideals. To-day you helped me to my ideal, and this is what I have done. You and Miss Drew both have a share in this."

"It was n't the same as when you were making that head in your notebook — I mean the one we were talking about in the boat. You did n't look that way when you were making this."

"No? How do you know? But never mind."

Mark's thoughts suddenly reverted to Louise. Would she call this trifling? Ah, he would finish that mural painting and make it rival the Chavannes in the Boston Library. Louise should be pleased at last. She should be made to look into his face with her soul in her splendid eyes. But in the meantime he must gather up his materials, and take his departure in all courtesy to his hostess, which he did, promising to return soon, and show Mrs. Drew his sketches about the countryside.

As he turned toward his boarding house he saw Jack Stoddard sauntering in his direction, and took note of the handsome fellow, wondering whither his steps were taking him. Somehow he vaguely hoped if Jack were going to the Drews', that Joyful might be well on her way home. Yet why should he care? If Jack really loved the child, might it not be a solution of the quandary as to what was to befall her? His glance into the young man's face, as they passed each other, was keen; and he walked on with a slight sense of dissatisfaction. The words he had overheard Joyful utter came back to him, "And I think it was noble in him." Of course, well dressed and debonair as he seemed, he might also be of a generous nature.

Mark smiled as he swung along, thinking of his proneness to dramatize the lives of all he met. Here were Nathanael and Elizabeth, and Jack and Joyful, already taking their places, an integral part of the drama wherein he was shaping their destinies to suit himself. Should he have Jack overtake Joyful on her way home, and if so what would he have her do? Should he have his own entrance into her small world influence her whole life, awaken her dreaming soul, and teach her how vast is the world, and how small is her Jack as a part of it?

Jane was laying the cloth for supper at the boarding house, and singing shrilly as she worked. Every now and then she slipped through the hall to the front door, to see whether the large-nosed young man might be passing, and incidentally to look whether the artist might be returning. She wondered where he had been all day. He surely must have gone in somewhere; he could n't have stayed out in all that pouring rain. No. There he was coming, and as dry as if

he had been in her mother's kitchen. She simpered a little, as she stood aside for him to pass.

"Been sketchin'?"

"I have been working a little, yes."

"Well, you must 'a found it pretty wet -- such a pourin' rain 's we've had."

"It has been raining a good deal," he said, in an absent way, as he mounted the stairs.

"You seem to 've kept dry, though. How 'd you manage 'thout an umbrel'?"

"Dry? Yes, I am dry, that's a fact. Oh, I always manage to keep dry in the rain." As he closed the door at the top of the stair carefully after him, a little smile curled his lip. "How on earth did the two ever grow up within a league of each other?" he thought.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE BARN STUDIO

"And ever when he came in companie
Where Calidore was present, he would lore
And byte his lip, and even for gealousie
Was readie oft his owne hart to devoure,
Impatient of any paramoure:
Who on the other side did seeme so farre
From malicing, or gruding his good houre,
That all he could, he graced him with her,
Ne ever shewed signe of rancour or of iarre."

THE storm that had driven Mark to take shelter in Mrs. Drew's cottage was the precursor of a week of rain which threatened to keep him immured in the boarding house. After a day of such confinement he fled, and bethinking himself of Nathanael's invitation to call, he donned a slouch hat and mackintosh, and walked out in the steady drizzle which had kept up since the evening before.

Arrived at the white picket fence which separated the surrounding farm lands from the small front yard, he spied Nathanael standing in the barn door, looking out over the fields. Mark passed by the house, which had a singularly shut-up and forbidding appearance, and joined him.

"Good morning," he said. "I thought you might be kept idle as well as I. This is abominable weather for me; how is it for you?" He would have offered his hand, but as the young man made no movement of the sort, he merely

stepped under cover from the rain and accepted the lighting up of Nathanael's face at the sound of his voice as sufficient evidence of a welcome.

"Very good. This weather's just what I need now; the soil of these stone piles is poor enough, without lacking rain. Won't you come into the house?" He spoke pleasantly, but a bit heavily, Mark thought.

"No, no. I only came for a little call on you. I've listened to Jane Somers' piano until I felt the need of flying to the companionship of some man who would allow me to give vent to my feelings. Would you have any objection to my sitting on this box and swearing a little — mildly, you know?"

Nathanael laughed outright. "Would you mind my sitting here on this oat bin and listening to you? I somehow feel as if a few large, round oaths would do me good."

"Why, what's the matter? I'm the one who's in trouble. I've come here for work, and when the weather fails me, I find myself shut up in an environment that would kill any ordinary artist. If I had n't schooled myself to paint in the presence of howling dervishes, I'd have —" He paused and looked about him, up at the cobwebbed rafters, and then at the loft — now empty for the most part of its winter store of hay — and then at the great round window in the gable which let in a stream of light.

"Paint here," cried Nathanael, catching at his thought.

"Man alive, do you mean it? That's the thing." He seized the young man by the shoulders and shook him vigorously. "Do you mean it, that I may monopolize this loft for a while?"

"Why should n't I mean it, if it will serve your purpose?"

"Certainly it will, and it may save my summer for me.

At least it will save me from being driven out of Woodbury Center for a while."

So Mark was installed in the Stoddard barn, and there, with his traveling equipment, and a few hangings sent from his city rooms, and a few pieces of rag carpeting which Nathanael brought out from the house thrown over the loose boards of the floor and the hay in the corner, he worked, fitfully, and yet earnestly.

Sometimes Nathanael lay stretched on the hay, with his hands locked behind his head, watching him. Sometimes they chatted together in a desultory way, and gradually they learned to know each other with a quiet, unobtrusive knowledge each of the other's affairs and tastes and whims and moods, in the tolerant, kindly manner which young men like. Mark never felt his moods for work dissipated by the other's presence; he rather liked it, indeed. It seemed to sanction only his best endeavor, as if with subtle intuition the young man knew when to keep still and when to speak. He liked the quaint goodness of the man, and the naïve originality of thought which saved his provincialism from making him common. He was so different in type from Mark's usual companions of the brush, as to be for him, for the nonce, a sort of inspiration.

One day, as Nathanael lay back in his usual attitude staring at the rafters, Mark placed Elizabeth's picture on his easel, and walked slowly backward, studying it, and whistling his customary meditative notes. Suddenly he turned to Nathanael, and asked, —

"Do you recognize this?"

The young man rose, stretched himself, and moved deliberately around in front of the easel. Instantly a

pallor overspread his face, and his hands clinched until the knuckles showed white. He drew in his breath slowly, but did not speak.

Mark was not looking at him. "Don't you recognize it?" he asked again.

"Yes," said Nathanael, dryly.

"Do you like it?" he went on, his head on one side, and his eyes screwed into a squint of calculating scrutiny. He was planning what changes would be needed for his mural painting. Suddenly, aroused by his companion's silence, he turned on him.

"See here, old boy," he said gently, taking him by the shoulder, "turn round here and look at me." But Nathanael only gazed off out of the window at a pile of drifting white cloud. "Come," said Mark again, in a low voice, "I thought we were friends. Look, and tell me if you see any mud in my eye."

Then Nathanael turned his large, blue-eyed gaze full upon Mark's warm hazel eyes and his hand sought Mark's. His lips moved, but he said nothing, and walking away he threw himself heavily again on his couch of carpet-covered hay, with his face to the wall. Mark removed the head from the easel, and taking up a painting of the sea began working on the foreground of wave-scalloped beach. Presently he threw down his brushes and, crossing to where Nathanael lay, sat beside him, clasping his knees with his arms, and continuing to whistle his low soft whistle.

"I'd like to tell you something," he said, at last, "—something I don't talk about much." The young man turned and gazed at him again, lying with his head raised and resting in his clasped hands.

"Don't trouble," he said huskily. "I'm a bit daft, I guess. You have a right to go where you please — paint whom you please — and — It was a kind of shock to me for a moment, that's all."

"Then you don't care to hear what I have to say?"

"Why, certainly, if you care to say it. I only did n't wish to be misunderstood, nor to hear any excuses."

"Man! I make excuses for painting a beautiful woman whenever I get the chance? Never!" Nathanael's lips closed in a grim, straight line, and he waited. "It's just this. You're not the only man who supposes himself in love with a woman. I am, myself. Every man is, who's good for anything. I happen to be in love with a glorious creature — I'm working hard to win her, and for that reason, you see, I'm not likely to be trying to win any other man's love away from him." He gave a little laugh, and looked in his companion's face, which relaxed a bit, as he replied, —

"No. You're not in love."

"How so?"

"You may imagine you are, but if you were, you'd never call her a 'glorious creature' as if she were your filly. That's not love, according to my definition."

"You're a suspicious old duffer — a proud old stickler of a Puritan. Not willing I should call my lady a glorious creature? What do you call yours?"

"I don't even venture to call her mine."

"Man! What do you do?"

"I treat her with the courtesy I give all women. I don't even allow her to think I am profane enough to love her; but you — you sail in and paint her portrait — she, whom I love better than my life — you — you would —"

"Go on. Say it all."

"You would call her a creature, as I would speak of my horse — you would —"

"Go on, go on, I say. This is what I like."

"Then I will go on," said Nathanael, savagely. "You would win in a day what I have waited years for — in a day you have it, with your knowledge of the world and the tricks of society. You — to think she could let you do that! You see what I am — a duffer, as you said — a farm hand, standing with gaping eyes and mouth, aloof, while you drop in my path and take all — all — the smiles, the pleasant companionship. Go ahead! You have the right to all you can get. I have my own life to live, and live it I must, if I die in this hole like a rat." He lifted his tall length from the floor, and began pacing about the loft. "Where did you put it?" he said, at last. "I want to see it again."

Mark rose, and pulling the picture out from among a heap of sketches, placed it once more before him. Then he walked back and stood with his arm across Nathanael's shoulder. "Look at it, man, — regard it well, and then tell me if you think I have profaned your love by painting it."

Nathanael mopped his brow with his handkerchief and wiped his dry lips. Then he took hold of the hand resting on his shoulder, and held it there. Mark's camaraderie, a thing he had never had before, and his genial kindness were thawing a way through the ice crust which encased his New England heart.

"The man who could paint that deserves anything," he said, at last; and Mark felt a tremor pass through the strong shoulders. "That's it. A man of ability, who has seen the world and had the finish — the polish — the subtle fineness

that comes from intimacy with women or the best of his own kind. Do you think I can't see the difference, or would expect a woman like that to look at me — in the way a man wants?" His sensitive face flushed through its fairness, as he paused in his hurried words. Never before had he opened his heart so nearly to any human soul. Mark began to speak.

"It's no matter," Nathanael interrupted. "Your coming here and doing this has only made me see it in a plainer way, without the glamour of even the vague little hope I was beginning to allow myself. It's the lightning stroke of the inevitable. It has to hit somewhere, sometime, you know." Nathanael threw out his words in huddled bunches, with long pauses between, and as he thus stammered forth his pain, Mark felt his heart warm toward him.

"No, I don't know," he replied. "I see no inevitable about it, except that you love this woman. Don't let my way of putting it fluster you; it's right. A man must love a woman, or he has no manhood in him. Why, fellow, it's a man's glory to be able to love a woman like that, and in your case I fail to see its hopelessness."

Nathanael gave an incredulous little laugh. "She has had every advantage of education and culture — she has money — she can go and come as she will. Since her young girlhood I've only seen her in the summers, between times of drudging on this farm. She may go out and choose her a mate from the best, while I hoe out my destiny among the grubs that eat my tomato vines. Not see its hopelessness?" he spread out his hands, showing the roughened palms. "There's a hand to offer a woman like that," he said, looking at the head on the easel.

"Come back and sit down. Let's talk this matter over

calmly," said Mark, quietly. "Now, then, tell me what is your bent?"

Nathanael looked up at him in surprise. "My bent?" he said.

"Yes. You seem to disparage this picturesque farm of yours —"

"It's my father's, not mine, nor likely to be."

"And talk about dying here like a rat in a hole. What do you mean by it? Don't be so eternally reserved. Tell a friend."

"I haven't much to tell."

"You're an educated man — you have brains. What do you want to do?"

Nathanael pulled a wisp from the pile of hay behind him and bit it in two, then with a dry laugh tossed it away. "Come," he said, "I'll show what I've kept to myself until I'm heart sick with impatience. You see —" he paused with a gesture of desperation, "I'm completely handicapped. I — well — in more ways than I could tell you." He passed along a narrow passage at the end of the stalls for cattle, and entered a small shed at the rear fitted up with bench and tools of various kinds. "Here it is. Come in." He set a stool near the bench, and Mark sat down, gazing about him in amazement.

The place was filled with various contrivances of mechanical device, some screwed to the wall, some tucked under the bench, or on it, and all connected with an electric battery in one corner by a complete system of wires. "Why, how's this?" Mark exclaimed. "I never dreamed this would be your bent; I had the idea that your taste ran more in the Greek and Latin line."

"Well, it did; at least, I had to go in the conventional track for a while. There seemed no way for me to get the money to finish my course at Harvard but to tutor, so I prepared myself that way; but somehow I got a taste for this kind of thing, and have followed it up when I have had time."

He seated himself on the bench and began playing with the buttons ranged at the back. "This is the way they work," he said. "Watch that clock start." His face grew alight with inward fire. "I have a means of working and adjusting every one of these contrivances, sitting here at my desk. Yonder is a safety car coupling; you know there has never yet been one that is perfectly practical, but this would be. I won't explain it now. And there is a lock for dams, easily worked, and free from the objections that make those escapes so unmanageable. I've worked hard for that. Behind those boards is a working model of a hoisting machine. A man can sit in his office and unload cars as fast as they can shove them up, very nearly. Now here, on this little dial, he can see just how full the vaults are; if it's grain, how many bushels, if ore, how many tons; just the shifting of this point regulates that. Watch now." He removed a screen of boards that covered the whole end of the room, and Mark saw the space behind was filled with the working model of which he had spoken, and noticed with delight the beautiful workmanship of all the parts, and the smoothness with which they acted when the affair was set in motion, which Nathanael accomplished, as he had said, from his seat at the bench.

"Why, man! You're a genius. What's the matter with you, that you were so down on yourself a while ago?"

"Humph! Genius? This represents a tremendous amount of hard work, and what can I do with it? Some of these things have been brought out by others, and are now in use before I could get together the money for their patenting. I have made these parts, every one of them, myself, when a little money would have saved me hours of labor, and given me the benefit of my ideas. What little I make on this stone heap of a farm is not mine, and it is gone before it is — but never mind. There is the money for a year's tutoring in that machine, just in the materials alone. It would be easier if I were only a dreamer, and were satisfied with these, but I am ready to go out and use them. I want a chance to make them practical. I don't care to spend any more time here, lying low and waiting."

"Does your father —?"

"Father's old and prejudiced. He's worked hard, and saved closely for all he has, and I would n't ask him for a cent of it, if I never get a patent."

"But surely he would be willing to help you out with this for the money there is in it."

Nathanael laughed his dry little laugh, and began putting up the board screen.

"Hold on a minute," cried Mark. "Let me understand this. What's the practical value? Can it do anything besides lift wheat?"

"That's it," cried Nathanael, his face lighting again. "This is what I have been fool enough to hope the most for. Lift wheat? It can lift anything. See here. Remove these pans, and shift this lever, and drop this shaft. Now it can hoist an elevator of coal from a mine; pull a carload of ore a mile away; do anything. My invention is chiefly valuable

for the ease with which it can be worked from a distance, and in the amount of power. Here are my drawings." He showed Mark his books, and carefully went over every detail. "Now," he said, when he had finished, "you are the only being living who knows the secrets of this little room. My brother's not interested in these things, and father thinks I'm little better than a gambler, and suspects me of wanting him to die so I can squander his hard-earned savings. But we'll drop that part. Here comes father now." He replaced the screen, as a little old man thumped up with his cane, and thrust his head in at the door.

"Be ye here, Nat?" he roared. Being deaf himself, he took the rest of the world to be also hard of hearing. "The cattle 're out of the lot, tramping over your corn planting." He turned and thumped away again, muttering to himself, without pausing to speak to Mark. "Always know where to find you when there's anything to be done, lazying over your fool trifles 'r loafing up the loft with that painter."

"I'll look after them, father," called Nathanael pleasantly after the retreating figure, and turning the key on his hopes as he turned it in the shed door. "I've taken a good deal of your time, Mr. Thorn, and I thank you for your interest," he said, with dignity, as they traversed the long passage after the muttering old man. His cheeks mantled with shame at his father's treatment of himself and his guest; nevertheless, as he was his father, he covered the hurt with a return to his habitual reserve. "Of course it disquiets father, with his strong prejudices, to find me mooning over these things."

"We must find a way out of this for you," said Mark. "Keep up a good heart, man."

"Thank you. I've tried to do that, but things have slipped from under my hands so often, and seeing you — knowing you — I realize how far away I am from my goal — I've set it pretty high, you know." He paused, and the inward fire of his nature burst through the crust. He leaned a little toward Mark, and said in a voice of low intensity, "Father believes hell is a lake of fire and brimstone. I know it is a man's soul, who has aspirations, and no hope."

"Have you ever had a friend?" said Mark, as he paused with one foot on the ladder leading up to his loft.

"Not in the sense in which you mean it, no. Not a man friend."

"Then take my hand and know that you have one. We'll talk this all over again soon, but now I'll go to my painting, and you look after your cows."

Nathanael did not reply, but he took the hand held out to him in a strong, nervous grasp, and their eyes met. He did not need to speak. Mark needed no more than that one magnetic look to assure him that his overture was received with the fine appreciation of a sensitive nature, and had sent a ray of heaven into that soul's hell.

CHAPTER VIII

JACK STODDARD'S WOOING

Far sailing on the faint horizon's edge
And all enmeshed in threads of golden light,
The fair moon rises from the moving sea,
And melancholy shades in hurried flight
Withdraw to holes and caves and somber woods;
And now comes sighing a poor lovelorn wight,
Lured by the moon's enchanting spell, to creep
And woo a maid throughout the charmed night.

SEATED in his loft before his easel, Mark worked for a while with unremitting care. An air from Schumann which Elizabeth had played for him the evening before hung in his mind, and he whistled the refrain, but he was not thinking of her. He was thinking of Joyful and Louise. He wondered why he was always connecting them in his thought when nothing that pertained to either could ever suggest the other. It seemed as if some intangible thread connected the two. Suppose they should meet, what would they do with each other? What would Louise do with Joyful, rather? "She is far better off with Miss Drew for her guardian angel," he thought, and with the thought came a haunting sense of disloyalty to his love. Yet he would not like to see Joyful changed.

Of course the child must develop and find her bearings, if ever she came to fend for herself, as she surely must sometime; but to be really changed, to be no more Joyful, with

the charmed soul, born of the woods, the sea, and the sky — how could she change and meet the sordid cares entailed in a struggle with the world for a right to exist and become a part of it, without suffering? Ah, it was a sad thought. She must undergo deterioration by it. Like a harebell torn from its mossy bank, were she to be dragged out into the world as he knew it, she would be crushed or transformed into something less lovely. He thought he saw in it all the very "Irony of Fate." Here was Nathanael, who should rightly and properly become her Knight Errant, large-minded and sweet-souled, capable of appreciating the child's charm; but he, forsooth, must needs fix his contrary heart on Elizabeth, who did not need him, and might suit herself with a lover where she would. The fellow had made a mistake. Why should he fix his affections in so hopeless a way on Elizabeth, when the very nature of the case demanded that he love Joyful? The more he thought it over, the more his plan appeared to be right.

Alas for the limitations of human knowledge! Could Mark Thorn have looked with omniscient eye into Elizabeth's soul, he would have found mirrored in its clear depths the image of the young man from whom he had just parted at the foot of the ladder. Could he have seen Joyful as her Creator saw her, he would have likened her not to a frail harebell by the stream, but to a priceless gem, which might indeed be trampled upon, but which could never take a stain because of its inherent inability to coalesce with impurity. Joyful, her stronghold being her own spirit, would be safer far in the midst of the world's entanglements than Mark Thorn himself, with all his worldly wisdom. However, not being omniscient, but merely a kindly human

brother, he softly whistled and worked, weaving a love tale out of the elements around him, and planning earnestly a way of escape for Nathanael from his present thralldom to the dragon of poverty and his father's captious nature.

"Has old Mr. Stoddard any money?" he asked Somers, as they sat on the step after supper that evening.

"Why, the' do say 't he's pretty well off 'nd got money banked away. Well, he'd ought to be — closter 'n a steel trap — be'n savin' ever sence he wuz born. He sticks to a dollar like a weasel sticks to a hen. Somebody told me 't knows, 't he's wuth ten thousand dollars 'f he's wuth a cent." Mark smiled at his loquacious informer's idea of boundless wealth, as he brought his wrinkled face close to his listener's ear, and spoke these last words in an awed whisper. "He's got good idees too, the old man has. Alluz square dealin' — pays all his bills up cash, goes to church reg'lar, 'nd prayer meetin', too, for all he can't hear nothin' when he does go. That's more 'n some does. But he's got idees, certain, fer all he's kinder grindin' on his sons, so the' say — on Nathanael leastways; not so much so on Jack; but then, p'raps Jack won't stand it. The' is boys that way. You can't grind 'em like you can some."

"How so?" Mark usually obtained all the information he wished by throwing in a question now and then, and waiting while Somers' slow speech trailed along over a wide range of village history.

"Why, ye see, they is them that ups and goes when th' grindin' sets in. They won't hev their noses held down, no more 'n a high-steppin' horse 'll lean to th' plow. Jack, he's mettlesome 'nd full o' sperrit, 'nd hard to hold. Nat, he 'll stan' most anythin' f'm his pa. When Jack skips, he

jes' ties down to th' farm 'nd makes things go. When his pa's temper's drove off every hand the' is to be got in th' place, he shuts his mouth up glum, 'nd carries things. Don't say nothin' to nobody. Some say he ain't got much sperrit, not to speak on, 'nd he doos go moonin' c'nsid'able; but there! 's I says to S'phi, I says, 't that boy's got more fire in him 'n you'd think. Says I, 'He's like yer rut beer—don't dast let th' cork out fer fear he'll fizzle so 't all the good the' is in him 'll go. Like's not he makes it a point to keep himself bottled up,' says I, 'nd I calc'late 't I'm right, too, fer he's like his ma. Now his ma, she was the greatest one to work you ever see. She'd work till she dropped in her tracks. Why, the way that woman died, 't was th'same's if she died with th' harness on 'nd was gone 'fore ye' could onhitch her. Some said 't she had n't no sperrit, 'er she would n't a let th' old man drive 'er so. But Land sakes! 't wan't his drivin'. She done it herself, 'nd how I know, well, 't was this way. Mis. Pitman, she lives next door here, she told S'phi, 'nd S'phi told me. She says to Mis. Stoddard one day, when she come there 'nd found her startin' to walk four mile to the station 'ith her butter after she'd done a big washin' in the mornin', says she, 'Why, Mis. Stoddard, whatever doos make you work so? Jes' killin' yerself,' says she, 'The' won't nobody give you no thanks,' says she. 'Nd Mis. Pitman says to S'phi, 'Mis. Somers, you'd ought to 'a seen her. She looked at me 's if her eyes'd shoot fire, 'nd she says, "Who wants thanks?"' says she. "I ain't doin' this f'r him; I'm doin' it f'r my two boys. They've got to be educated 'f I have to crawl on my hands and knees 'nd pack this butter to th' station on my back.'"

"Nobody need n't tell me 't she was a poor sperritless

creature. You see, sperrit works two ways. In some it makes 'em high steppin', 'nd drivin' o' others, 'nd I take it that 's Jack's way; 'nd then in others it makes 'em work themselves like all possessed till the whole 'tarnal earth can't stop 'em from gettin' what the' 're after. Well, the old man was fair, 'f he is clost. The' do say 't he put by all the money 't she earned, 'gainst the boys growed up, 'nd that 's what sent 'em to college. Nat, he was through high school, put' near, when she died. Nat went to Harvard, all right, like his ma wanted, 'nd when he come to his last year he quit 'nd sent Jack. You see, how he come to quit, he would n't spend a cent more 'n his half o' th' money. The' do say, 't when Jack came to take his turn, 't he run through 's much money 's had done Nat three years, in six months, 'nd then Nat run in debt f'r him, I don't know how much. Nat never 'd tell. His pa would n't help him out none, so all the money Nat 'd earnt in one way and another 't he 'lowed to finish up on, all went to his brother. He says Jack 'll pay him back — well, I hope he will — 'fore it 's too late." Here Mrs. Somers' voice was heard, calling shrilly.

"Somers — Somers — where be yuh? Hain't you never goin' to draw the water? I got to put them clo'es a-soak."

"Yes, S'phi, I 'm comin' fast 's I can. Women is the most impatient creatures! It does beat all how differently college works on boys. Now Nat — when he started in he was one o' these green, or'nary chaps, jes' halfway between stringin' and shellin', like all boys is 'long 'bout that age, but when he come home you never see such a change 's the' was in that boy. He carried himself straight 'nd head up, like one o' these blood horses 't lets the check-rein flop loose — looked ye' in the eye 'nd took his hat clean off his

head to th' women — guess the' wan't much inside o' books 'r out of 'em he had n't learned in them three years; but his brother — well, with him 't was diff'rent. Now he — ”

“Somers! Be ye' there? Be ye goin' to draw that water 'r ain't ye?” called the exasperated voice of S'phi.

“Yes, ma, yes. I'm comin' — Women can't never wait for nothin' — But I kinder noticed Nat lately. He seems to be gitt'n glum 'nd mopin' again.” He rose and sauntered around the house, disappearing in the direction of the well.

Mark sat a few moments longer, then decided he would call on the Drews for an evening of music and chat. He had fallen in the way of doing this. As they sat on the little stoop in the evening light, some one strolled past, dimly seen in the gathering dusk. “Could that be Jack Stoddard?” Elizabeth asked herself. “Why was he here again so soon?”

Mark had been speaking of Nathanael, revealing none of the secrets of the little barn workroom, however, holding sacred, even from these friends, the young man's confidences.

“There 's splendid material in that young fellow — I am convinced of it,” he was saying.

“So am I,” replied Elizabeth, quietly.

“Nathanael holds himself too much aloof from his fellows,” said Mrs. Drew. “It 's not good for a young man.”

“Mother, who is there in the village for him to associate with? No one here is his equal, unless, perhaps, the rector, and he feels himself so exalted by reason of his office that Nathanael could as easily hobnob with the church door. I would like to shake that man sometimes. His black clothes fit him altogether too well.”

“Nathanael spoke freely with thee, Elizabeth, concerning his brother; yet he kept back much, I 'm thinking.”

"He seems very fond of that brother of his," said Mark. "I've only seen the boy twice. He returned this evening, and I had a few words with him at the Stoddards' gate. He's a handsome fellow."

"Far too handsome," said Elizabeth. "I thought he sailed away three weeks ago, for a three years' cruise. What is he back for?"

"That's more than I know," said Mark, with a laugh. "Perhaps it is to see Joyful Heatherby. Was n't that he who passed just now?"

Elizabeth sat silent and troubled. She did not care to allow this man, almost a stranger, to surmise her thoughts.

"He may be a good fellow," continued Mark, "but he never would be able to appreciate that child's nature. His brother could, if he cared to."

"Thee must have her to spend the day with thee to-morrow, Elizabeth."

"Not to-morrow, mother. Thee has forgotten thy engagement in town. Next day I will. Shall we go in for some music? I have a new song you must try for me, Mr. Thorn."

So they went in and looked over new music, and the subject of their neighbors was dropped. Mark wondered, with a slight sense of disappointment, at her apparent indifference. He had thought her greatly interested in Joyful. In one corner he noticed a quaint old guitar case of leather, studded with brass. "Do you play that instrument also?" he asked, regarding it curiously.

"Very little. I like the piano better, of course. That is Joyful's guitar. It was her mother's." She took it from the case. "See, it's a very fine one."

"Did you know her mother?"

"Indeed, yes. She was not really as pretty as Joyful, but she had a rare charm about her. I never loved any woman more, except my mother," she said softly. "Examine this. The workmanship is beautiful. Joy plays it very well, and has quite a pretty taste. Her mother taught her, and I've helped her somewhat. She leaves it here when we're at home, and comes to practice when she has time. She is a busy little thing, you know. She can't play it at home because it makes her grandmother very melancholy."

Elizabeth turned away and began a nocturne of Chopin's. She hated to show her feelings, but Mark thought he was beginning to understand her, and sat silent, listening. Suddenly she stopped and turned half round. "Perhaps you think it strange I care so little about Jack's going to see her; but I know Joyful. She's in no danger from him. She is so far away from him and so elusive, that he might as well think of courting a rainbow."

"I don't know about that. I heard her defending him roundly to her grandmother, the evening they took me in. I could n't help hearing. I did n't know who Jack was then, but I think she may be in danger."

Elizabeth turned and finished the nocturne. "Nathanael's love will save her from Jack, in that event," she thought, but said only, "I think it was merely her kindness of heart. She would champion any one whom she felt was being abused — besides — some one else thinks more of her than Jack does, or ever could."

She plunged into a tumultuous tarantelle, and Mark leaned back and watched her. "She's too deep for me," he

thought. "Does she mean Nathanael, or is she trying to ward me off?"

He went home with the question still unanswered, and determined to spend the next day at the Heatherbys' and paint Joyful, if he could; and if not, sketch in the vicinity. He would see more of the child. She was continually in his thoughts, and always with a sense of foreboding for her future. Yet he smiled at the futility of any attempt on his part to interfere with her fate. What could he do? She must live her little life here until some way opened — but then what? One thing only could he do. He could teach her not to idealize Jack. To save her from him was something, and moreover, he would look into the matter of Nathanael's inventions and see what he could do to start the man along. He would run up to Boston, and see a few business friends there, and stop long enough to visit his aunt and Louise.

Jack had spent that evening seated on the Heatherbys' porch, smoking with the old man, and talking, and watching impatiently for Joyful to come out. He knew she was in her room, for he could see the light in her window, and hear her stepping about. He explained loudly, that she might hear, that their sailing had been delayed, and that he had run up to see Nat, and must leave again next day; that this was the only evening he would have, and that then he must be a wanderer. But in spite of the sadness at his heart, which he felt sure she ought to know, she did not appear. He was angry, and held his head high, and presently bidding the old man good-bye, stalked away into the darkness.

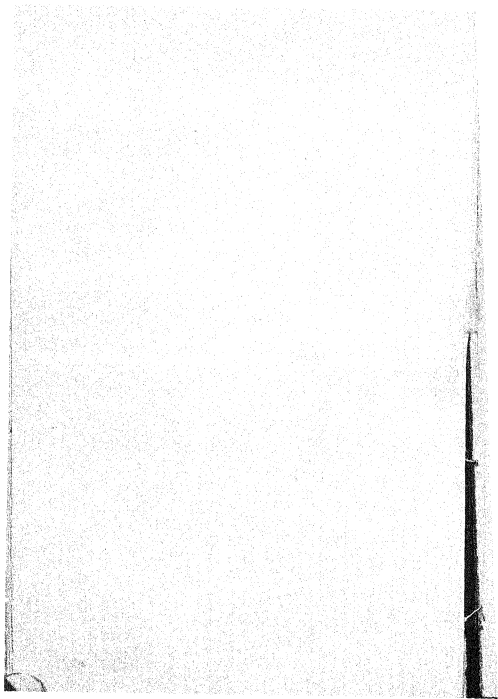
He had not seen her since the evening he had kissed her at the gate. She had a shamed fear of meeting him after that

kiss, and during the week of his stay had persistently avoided him by spending as much of her time as possible with Elizabeth, practicing her guitar and sewing. She would hurry around with her work at home, kiss her grandmother good-bye, and escape. Sometimes she longed to have her old playmate back again as he used to be, even with his tyranny and boyish contempt of her girl ways; and as she heard his voice below, on this soft June evening, she cried a little; but all the more she would not go down, nor let him see she cared, partly through pride, and partly through maidenly fear lest he seize upon her and make her say something she did not wish to say. In her heart she could not help comparing Mr. Thorn with him. "Of course he is n't as handsome as Jack — no one is — but then" — and again the gentle courtesy of Mark's manner would come back to her, and the inflections of his voice. She heard him saying, "Again you are right, Miss Joyful." Then she would go over in her mind considering the things of which he was talking with Mrs. Drew and Elizabeth. Why, Jack would n't even know what the difference was between Mr. Thorn and himself.

Thinking these thoughts, she leaned out of the window and watched the moon in a glowing disk, rise out of the sea. The house grew still, and she knew her grandfather and grandmother were gone to bed. The night tempted her. She would go out to the bluff and watch the "Gold-green snakes" playing in the path of the moonlight on the water. She threw a little red shawl about her, and ran out into the beautiful night, along the path through the blueberry lot to the edge of the bluff. There she stood gazing off into the mysterious dimness with the long path of quivering



Jack was close beside her. She could feel his breath upon her cheek.
Page 135.



light, leading in luminous perspective to the wonderful golden ball now floating on the horizon line. It seemed to her the very soul and center of all mystery, creeping slowly up to look out over the earth upon the hidden things — the soft, fluttering things that feared to come out in the blazing light of day.

She looked up at the sky. It was very far away — farther than in the daytime, and its blue seemed turned into a purple black, sparingly studded with brilliant points. She stretched out her arms toward the streaming light on the sea. Ah! if she could only go out there, and walk on it. She threw back the little shawl and let the cool air blow about her face and neck, and her heart filled with a strange and thrilling gladness — she could not have told why, nor for what — but only that the world was so very beautiful and sweet and still. Her soul cried out in ecstasy a voiceless song of gladness, born of her youth and strength, and the slumbering dream in her breast of something that was to come to her some day, and which would be akin to this moment of sweetness and stillness and mystery.

She forgot Jack and her fear of being alone with him again, and stood quiet in her breathless happiness, only feeling that the world was very beautiful, and that God was good to make it so, and to give it all to her — all the beauty. Again she stretched her arms out toward the glorious path of light, and slowly sank upon her knees. What if it should become a real path and lead into heaven?

"Joy."

She gave a violent start, and rose quickly to her feet. Jack was close beside her. She could feel his breath upon her cheek, and she shrank back, even to the very edge of

the bluff. He reached out and caught hold of her, pulling her away.

"Why, Joy, you must n't start so. It's only me. Come back. You'll pitch over there. I did n't mean to scare you so, Joy. No, I'm going to hold on to you as long as you will stand so close to the edge. Come. You're not afraid of me, Joy — I declare I believe you've been sleepwalking."

She stepped away from the edge of the bluff, and he let her slip from his grasp. "I've been sitting right over there under that crab tree all the time. I wonder you did n't see me. You must have been sleepwalking."

"No, I have n't. What are you doing here? I thought you went home."

"I could n't go without seeing you, Joy. Why would n't you come down? You knew I was there." She said nothing, but looked off over the sea again. "I stayed around here hoping you'd come out, and if you had n't, I'd have thrown pebbles on your window and called you out. Did you think I was going to sail away without seeing you again — without getting the promise I want? What makes you shiver so, Joy? Are you cold? Here, put on my coat."

"No, no. I'm not cold. No, Jack."

"What made you keep out of my way that week I was at home? Here I've had to come all the way back just for this; you knew all the time I was there, but you stayed in your room. What makes you treat me so, Joy? Don't you like me any more?"

Regretfully she had turned her back on the sea, and on her dreams and imaginings. The reality which had come so suddenly upon her seemed more unreal than they.

She wished he would not walk so close to her, and hurried her steps a little toward the cottage.

"Why do you hurry so, Joy? Wait a little. Don't you like me any more, Joy? Say, don't you?" He spoke with a quiver in his voice, for he was sorry for himself, and its sadness touched her.

"Why, yes, Jack. I told you so before."

"Well, you don't act like it. You used to run to meet me when I came, and have something to tell me, as if you were glad; but now you run away from me, and try not to see me."

"But you're changed, Jack. I wish you would go back and be just as you used to be."

"Of course I'm changed. Would you have me stay a boy all my life? I'm a man now, and have prospects before me. I mean to be rich some day — I have the chance — and I sha'n't let it get away from me. I have a perfect right to speak to you. See, Joy — there's just one big chance in me, and I'm not going to change back. Then I was a boy, and your playmate, and now I'm a man, and your lover." He caught her suddenly and drew her close to him. "Some day you're going to be my wife, Joy. I always meant that. Kiss me now, and say you will."

Ah! He was so strong and handsome, and this was really like what she had read of in books. All the girls had lovers, of course, so she ought to have one; but her heart was beating so hard, and she could not feel her feet under her — they seemed numb — and she could not catch her breath to speak. She lifted her downcast face, and the sweet red lips drew near to his. Suddenly the old fear clutched at her heart, and she turned her face away,

and his kiss fell on her cheek. That was the way he had kissed her before. Oh, if he would only stop! What would her grandmother say — and grand-daddy — what would he say if he knew she were out here in the night, in Jack's arms, being kissed? What would Elizabeth say? She tried to tear herself away from him.

"Oh, Jack! Let me go. Stop, Jack; I'm not ready to have a lover yet."

"Yes, you are, Joy. This is all right! You're going to be my wife some day, you know."

"Jack, I tell you, no! It isn't all right! I've never told you I would. Let go of me. I shall hate you, Jack." She put her hand over his eyes and pushed his face away.

"That's right, Joy. Blind me. Hate me and blind me," he said bitterly. "I can't see anything but you; I can't think of anything but you. Push me off and hate me." But he still held her.

Suddenly she stopped her futile struggle, and seemed to gain power from within, or above herself. "Jack," she said, in a low quiet voice, "Stop. Let go of me and take my hand and walk back with me toward the house. I have something to say to you."

He obeyed her, and she put her hand in his and led him on toward the house, but did not speak. As they neared the cottage, he drew back.

"Stay here, Joy. If we go any farther they'll hear us talking and call you in. What is it you have to say to me? Is it what I want, Joy? What I came back for?"

They paused under a wide-spreading thorn tree, and she turned from him, leaning her head in her arms against its rough bark, and stood for a moment silent. His vehemence

had frightened her, and she feared lest she say what she might afterwards repent. Her heart was crying out within her for help, but he thought her weeping, and longed to take her again in his arms and comfort her. He felt as he had done when a boy and had hurt her.

"Don't cry, Joy. Did I hurt you? I could n't help it. I can't seem to make you understand how I feel," he pleaded, putting a shaking hand on her shoulder and bringing his face close to hers again. "Listen, Joy."

But she held him back. "No, Jack. I must talk now. You must n't try to make me say what you want. When you come back in another year you'll find me here just the same — why need you be so determined when I have n't had time to think of — of it — now — as you would have me? Why need you, Jack?"

"No. I can't wait a year. I want to feel that I have your promise. Think what it would do for me, Joy, — give me a hope, and something to save me from everything I ought to be saved from. I could n't do wrong, you know, Joy, when I have you to think of. Rather than go without your promise, I'd steal you this minute and take you off and marry you now." He spoke eagerly. "Don't keep stepping back from me. You act as if you were afraid of me, Joy."

"I am, Jack, when you hold me against my will."

"Then don't let it be against your will, Joy."

"That's it. My will must always be your will; but this time I'll not do your way. That's why I would n't see you again — and, Jack, listen to me. I can't save you from anything. Every one has to fight his own monsters."

"What have monsters to do with this?"

"You know what I mean. Out in the world, where you are going, are the monsters — things you must overcome, and if you can't be brave and fight them because it's in your own heart to do it, and because you, your own self, just hate anything but good and right, what help could any promise from me be to you?"

"Why, it would help me to be strong to think you were here waiting for me, you know."

She shook her head. "I don't know how it is, but some way it seems to me a great man like you, to be really noble and good, ought to be strong in his own heart, and not need always some kind of a reward held out, like saying, 'Now, Jack, be good, and when you come back you can have me,' as if I were a piece of sugar candy and you were a baby. You just ought to sail away with your head up, as true and strong and glorious as the knights of old did, who used to go and slay dragons, just because ugly, wicked things were hateful to them. That's the way Nathanael would do."

"Yes, and come back and find that he, or some other fellow, had won you away from me, and I was left out in the cold. I see. It's Nat, or some one, who seems better to you than I. That's why you're afraid."

Joyful turned abruptly away and walked toward the house. "It's late, Jack. I'm going in."

He ran after her and caught her up in his arms, just as she reached the gate. "Joy, you must stop and say you'll promise me before I leave. Were you going in with never a word for me, when this is to be the last for a year, perhaps two?"

"Yes. I don't like the way you're acting. Put me down.

We're not children any more, and this is different. I'm sure. Something makes me feel that you're not — Oh, Jack! Can't you see you're only making me afraid of you? Put me down," she entreated.

"Just see how I could carry you off, if I chose, and you could n't help yourself. Shall I take you away and never bring you back? Give me my promise, or I will."

"I'll tell you nothing until you put me down, Jack!"

"There, then. Stand on your own little feet." He put his hand under her chin and turned her face up to his. "Tell me, and stop shivering so. Why, Joy, I would n't hurt you, don't you know that?"

"I'll make you just one promise, Jack, and that must content you. I'll not marry any one — how could I? — but I'll stay right here with grandmother. She needs me. You'll find me here with them just as I am."

He still lifted her face toward his. "Is that all?"

"Yes."

"You won't promise to marry me when I come back?" She was silent, and her lips quivered. "Won't you watch for me, and hope for me to come?"

She pushed his hand away very gently. "I sha' n't promise any more than what I've said. When you come back you may be very glad I have not. You can't tell. I have read of men who have made girls promise things, and then never came back, but stayed away and broke their hearts; and some, like Tannhäuser, who have gone off and listened to sirens, who are wicked beings who have no souls — and —"

"What do I know about Tannhäuser? That's no way! Either you love, or you don't love me. Tannhäuser has nothing to do with us."

"Oh, I do, Jack, I do. Or at least I did, before you acted in this way. You're safe enough with the promise I have made, and some day you may be glad it is no more. Be good, Jack, and say good-bye, properly — and — Not that way, Jack. It is n't —"

"Then give me my promise, or I'll do worse," he said, with shaking voice. But again she slid out from his grasp and through the little gate.

"Good night, Jack, — Good-bye. Do right, Jack, — good-bye," she said softly, and reaching up, she just touched his cheek with her hand, and was gone. It was the only caress she had ever voluntarily given him, except one. She was a little thing, and had hurt his hand by slamming the gate against it in one of her tantrums of rebellion at his authority. That time she had kissed the hand she had hurt, and one of her precious tears had fallen on it. Now, again her tears had dropped upon his hand as he had held her face turned up toward his. He thought of that other time, and stood leaning against the gate. He longed for her to come out again. His arms ached to hold her as he had held her a moment since. Why should she fear him, and slip away from him? He knew in his heart she was right and he wrong, yet he did not care. He wished he had held her and kept her with him.

CHAPTER IX

JOYFUL'S SECRET

It happened once upon a summer day,
A maid walked forth into a darkling wood.
Child of the rain, and of the sun's bright ray,—
Undina was she called — and while she stood
Listening a bird note in a tree top high,
God wrought in her fair soul a mystery sweet,
Called love; and when she turned, she saw anigh
A strong knight kneeling at her feet.

As Joyful slipped in and fastened the door behind her, she heard no sound but the ticking of the clock and the purring of the gray cat curled up on the patchwork cushion of the rocking-chair. The room seemed so cozy and safe that again she thought of her mother's words, "Here art thou safe, little one," as she crept shivering up to her own little white-curtained chamber. The moonlight streamed over the floor and fell across the white counterpane and pillows of her bed, and she knelt there, still and white in the silvery light. She was neither praying nor thinking; she was quivering throughout her whole being with the strange excitement that had seized upon her. Her heart was filled with a woeful longing and foreboding. Oh! if she could have her father and mother back again, she could tell them, and ask what to do. If only Jack had n't talked that way, and had let things be as they were! She felt

that because of him and what he had said, she could not be happy any more. Grand-daddy would be so angry if he knew, and grandmother might have a spell. No, she must keep this from them; but was it right? At last, from sheer weariness, she fell asleep there, to wake at last, stiff and wondering. Then she said her prayers and crept into bed, and again sobbed herself to sleep, questioning in her heart if maidens always felt like this when they had lovers, or if it was really such a gladsome thing as the romancers made out.

"Joy, seems to me ye're looking white this morning. What ails you?" said her grandfather to her next day, as he passed her in the summer kitchen, where she stood with her hands in the flour, kneading a ball of spongy dough.

"Am I?" she asked, her face suddenly turning crimson.

"Why, no, y' ain't now, you look like a pe'ny. What ails you, child?"

"Nothing, grand-daddy."

"She said she had headache when she first came down this mornin'. Why don't ye tell ye'r grandfather the truth, Joy?" said Mrs. Heatherby. "Here — let me finish that bread, 'nd you wash th' flour off ye'r hands 'nd run out in the sun a spell. It'll do you good."

"I'm all right now."

"The sun'll do you good. Run on, child. You're nothing else, fer all ye're tall's I be."

Joyful threw her arms contritely about her grandmother's neck, scattering flour over the lilac gown, and went out. A vague sense of guilt in the keeping of her secret troubled her, and her heart ached. She crept upstairs and stood looking

over her precious books, and finally selecting two favorites carried them out in the sun, as her grandmother had told her to. First she started down the path toward the sea, but there the thought of Jack and his eager wooing oppressed her, and the sense of fear that had made her quiver under his touch rushed over her again. She turned back and strolled into the woods, thinking new thoughts, and wondering why she thought them.

For a while she started and trembled at every slightest noise, fearing it to be the fall of a foot, or the breathing of a man near her. What if Jack should come again suddenly — what could she say? But then, why should she be afraid of him? Had n't they always known each other? Had she done right to send him away as she did? Could n't she have been kinder? But then, he was changed. He was not the old Jack who had played with her and tyrannized over her all her life. If he would be her lover, he must show his love by doing something she asked of him first, as the knights of old always did. First he must pay Nathanael all he owed him. She would tell him that, if he came again. She shut her lips firmly, and took comfort in the thought that she had something definite to say, for her true and inward objection to his suit she could not interpret to herself, much less to him. It was a subtle fear that pervaded her inmost soul, when he changed from the playfellow into the lover. Her heart revolted and cried out: "No, no. He shall not possess me."

An hour later, had Mark Thorn been gifted with prescience, he could not have chosen a more propitious moment to walk into her presence. It was with deliberate purpose he had set out that morning, armed with paints and brushes.

With the unconscious arrogance that pertains to the human species, he would essay to assume the Lord's prerogative of deciding the destinies of human souls. Nathanael did not know what was good for him, moreover Joyful should be saved from becoming the slave of the erratic Jack. He would probe into her nature and learn what influences were at work there. He would paint her and incidentally watch her moods, and study her heart — and lo! — here was his picture all planned for him, a true sylvan romance.

On a seat fitted in the forked trunk of an enormous beech, she sat, with the sunlight scattered over her, like golden rain through the leaves. She was reading the story of Undine, in the French, and had forgotten to listen for footsteps. When she heard him approach, she awoke with a startled pallor which quickly changed to a flush of joy, as she looked up. He took note of both the pallor and the flush.

"Oh, I'm so glad it's you. I thought —" she stopped.

"Here we go again," he said, merrily. "What did you think?"

"Are you going to paint now? May I stay by and watch you? Do you care?"

"Oh, don't throw away your book." He sat down at her side. "May I see this? Ah, Undine. Yes — I was going to paint, and you may watch me all you like — but you did not tell me what you thought."

She laughed; but again the paleness passed into her face, and was gone. "Perhaps I didn't think."

"You said 'I thought,' and stopped, you know."

"Well, that's it. Don't you ever say I think, when you mean just the opposite?"

"Come, tell me truly, what did you, or did n't you think?"

"You are like old King John, with his Abbot, and his 'questions three': 'But, tell me here truly what I do think,' only you say 'What *you* do think.' I did n't think it was you, that's all."

"Then I'm very glad you looked pleasant, otherwise I should have thought you were disappointed that I am not some one else."

"Oh, no. I'm glad. You know I told you so. What are you going to paint?"

"I came to ask if you would be as kind to me as Miss Drew was, and let me paint you?"

"Oh, will you?" she cried joyfully. "Then I shall see how I would look if I were somebody else. What shall I be?"

Mark sat slowly turning over the leaves of the book in his hand. "Do you love this story?" he asked.

"I love it — yes. I used to love it when I was so small I had to spell out all the hard words to mother." She took the book from his hand and turned to her mother's name written on the flyleaf. "Father wrote that," she said, and kissed it.

"Would you like me to paint you as Undine?"

Her eyes opened wide with amazement. "I could n't dance in a rainbow mist for you."

"No, no," he laughed, and then they both broke into merry laughter. "Undine was of many moods and in many places. I would like to paint a series of pictures showing the spirit of the tale, and it would help me greatly to find some one who could understand its true meaning, to pose for me."

"Do you think any one could understand all its real, true meaning?"

"If not, I would like to find some one who loves the story, and is capable of throwing herself into the poetic sentiment of it, and that I am sure you are."

"Yes," she cried, with simple directness. "Shall we begin now? What shall I wear?" She rose and stood straight and animated before him, with laughter and light in her eyes. "I did it once, when I was very small. It was raining and was dark, with just a little flash of lightning now and then, and it was warm summer time. I remember I climbed out of bed and ran out in my bare feet to dance on the green and shake the water drops from my hair, and rap on the window, and make them come and see me glimmer in the darkness."

"What did they do?"

"Oh, father came out and ran after me, and I dodged about, and he caught me and carried me in, all wet. I remember feeling so sorry I could n't vanish and turn into rain in his arms, and then have him find me sitting all quietly in the house when he came in, as Undine would have done. Mamma was going to give me a little whipping, but he had only just come home from a voyage that day, and so he said no, and they both took me up to bed, and put me in dry clothes, and sat by me until I went to sleep."

Mark opened his box and began arranging his easel. "We can paint right here, and you must help me as you did when Miss Drew sat for me, about planning the dress."

As she stood watching his movements, she reached up and caught a long branch of wild grapevine that hung above

her head, and clung to it, swaying back and forth in the rain of golden sunlight. Mark looked up, and saw his pose.

"There, stand as you are," he cried. "It could n't be better." He placed himself on the shadowed side of her and began rapidly to catch the salient points of his picture, ere she should grow weary.

For a time he worked in silence with knitted brows, as if his very life depended on each stroke of his brush; while she swayed to and fro, clinging to the vine, and watching his face with serious eyes. Her thoughts were filled with many grave wonderings now, about the story for which she was posing; about him and the lady whose face he had drawn in his notebook; and thus a half hour was passed ere he awoke to the thought of the physical tension under which he was keeping her.

"I wish I could be in front of you and behind you too, so I could see what you're doing," she said, at last. "If I were Undine, I would dissolve in a thousand sparkling drops, and then if I did n't like it, I would shake them all over you and your picture. How would you like that?"

He started from his abstraction, and saw, with contrition, that she looked pale and weary. "My child! I have done very wrong. You are tired. Come, yes — come and see this. It won't look like anything to you yet." He made her sit on his stool, and lean back against a tree trunk. His gentle manner of solicitude made her think of her father, and she looked up in his face instead of at the picture.

"What do you think of it, Miss Joyful?" he said kindly, bending toward her.

Her lips quivered. She struggled bravely for a moment to regain the mastery over herself, then suddenly covering

her face with her hands she turned away, and leaned against the rough tree behind her in a passion of weeping. The nervous strain under which she had been for the past two weeks had culminated in this.

Mark with difficulty restrained himself from gathering her up in his arms, in his tenderness toward the weeping child. What should he do? What had he done? At last he lightly touched her hair.

"Miss Joyful, don't, don't. Were you too tired? I was a thoughtless brute."

She was ashamed to cry before him, and could not lift her face. No, she was n't tired, and he was n't a brute. She would stand for him again in a minute. It was something else—she couldn't tell him. She didn't know herself what it was. So he sat apart on the seat in the beech tree, and read her books, and waited for her to grow calm. One was an old copy of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," and he began the quaint phrases describing Una, Joyful's sweet "Ladye Faire." Presently he glanced up and saw that she was gazing at his picture.

"Well," he smiled on her, "what do you think of it?" Mark never forgot her face as it was at that moment—a very April of laughter breaking over it, while her eyes yet swam in tears.

"I think I look a very funny, dauby Undine there now. What are those long streaks of blue hanging down?"

"That? Oh, that's to be her dress."

"Oh, are you going to make it like this I have on?"

"Yes, almost. It's simple and good, why not?"

"Why, I thought it would be all swinging and swirling about like waves in a brook when they come to a stone."

"Oh, but you must remember that the good people had dressed her in human garments like a sensible little peasant. This dress you have on is simple and straight — I'll put a kerchief around the neck."

"You must be right, but — don't you think she might put on something herself — that the wind would toss about? Blue is all right, like the blue water. I see what you mean by all those yellow patches falling about her — a kind of rain of light — is n't it?"

"Yes, Miss Joyful. Your intuitive sense may help me much. Now tell me how you would dress her."

"I think even if they did dress her like the peasant children, she would still be different. She would find a long shining scarf or something that she could hang about her that would make you think of mist. I'll show you." She darted off among the great trees in the direction of the cottage. "I'll be back in a minute," she cried.

Mark busied himself in bringing order out of the confused masses of color on his canvas. He was disturbed by her sudden outburst of tears, and had decided to probe more deeply into the mysteries of her strange, wise child's soul, when she came swiftly back, her hair shaken out and floating in the wind. A long, diaphanous cloud wound about her head and, lightly twisted among the brown curling masses of her hair, fell to her feet. It was a rare and ample web, shot with delicate tints of azure and gold and rose and green. Her slight figure and straight blue skirt were both concealed and revealed by its shifting, floating presence. Mark stared in amazement.

"This is what I think. Undine might have had something like this, made out of rainbows, which she would keep

hidden away under the waterfall, to take out and hang around her when she sported among the shadows at sunset."

"Miss Joyful, wherever did you get such a wonderful web as that?"

"It was mother's. Father brought it from away off somewhere. I suppose I ought not to take it, but it's mine. See. Will this be like Undine before her lover came?" She hung swaying again, clinging to the wild vine as before, but with a wistful look in her eyes.

"It's perfect, perfect, Miss Joyful. How do you think she should look after her lover came?" A light had begun to break in on Mark's understanding.

"Why, she would — perhaps she would be sad then."

"Is that the way a maiden feels when she has a lover?"

She swung half around away from him and gazed up into the top of the beech. "I know where there's a whip-poorwill's nest," she said, but in her heart she was wondering if Mark himself were a lover. "He would make a fine one, and a true knight, too, since he was a fighter of the monsters," she thought.

Mark glanced toward her as he worked on. "You did n't answer my question," he said gravely.

"I can't. You know that. It's different in these days. Then lovers had to ride away and fight, and achieve some very hard thing, to win a maiden's heart."

"And what do they have to do nowadays?"

"I don't know how it is out there in your old world," she said, laughing. "You should tell me that. Aren't you a lover? I suppose every man has to be, sometime."

"Why, Miss Joyful?"

"Because. Undine found her soul, you know, when she

loved. What are you fighting monsters for if you aren't a lover?"

"Ah, there you have me, Miss Joyful."

"But you don't answer me."

Mark looked at his watch. "You mustn't stand any longer to-day; you will be exhausted. You've taken that position for me more than an hour. Sit here on this seat and I'll make a bargain with you. If you'll tell me why you wept a while ago, I'll answer your question truly."

"I can't tell you exactly why, because I don't know, myself, but — something troubles me which I can't tell grandmother. Don't ask me any more; I'm afraid I shall cry again," and again came the April laughter with tears behind.

Mark set a strong restraint upon himself to cover his most normal tenderness toward the child. "I won't torment you to tell me, if you don't wish it," he said very gently, "but would n't it be well for you to tell your 'Ladye Faire' about it?"

"Oh, I can't!" cried Joyful, with a burning blush of shame. The more she thought of her ardent lover of the evening before, the more she shrank from speaking of him.

Mark, with genuine anxiety for her, felt the truth, but he covered her confusion, leading her away for the time being into a pleasant path of speculation.

"Now it's my turn," he said, looking into her face smilingly. "Only since you tell me but half, I shall tell you but half and leave you to guess the rest as you leave me to do; but first, answer me one more question. Why do you think every man must be a lover sometime?"

"Half the time I think things without knowing why I think them, but is n't it so? Must n't a man be a true

lover of some one or something before he ever achieves anything? Isn't that what it means to be a lover or a true knight?"

"Yes, Miss Joyful, yes. But few ever learn that sacred truth." They were silent then, and Mark sat with hands clasped about his knee, his gaze fixed on a bunch of wild violets before him, thinking of a way that led to another place and another face, and wondering if he could ever reach his ideals along that path.

Joyful brought him back by speaking again. "I don't think Undine's lover was much of a true knight, after all — do you?"

"No, no, Miss Joyful."

"And after she found her soul she was so sad, and before that she was joyous — just like that little finch up there."

Mark looked at the bird. "Yes. Wouldn't she have been better off without her soul, then?"

She smiled. "That was what I used to think, but now — now that father and mother are gone, I understand. You see, my father was a true knight. He rescued her as a knight should, and they were true, true lovers, beautiful to think about. I think about them many times at night." She drew a long, tremulous sigh, half a sob. "I like to have them to think about, and now they have each other still, but if they were n't souls, you know, they would have gone out, and I would not have them any more, either."

"You are a poet, Miss Joyful, and you have found out the true secret of life." He lifted his height from the low seat, and began putting his tools together. It was near noon, and his light was all changed. He could paint no more.

"Are you going? But you have n't told me yet."

"So I have n't," he said, scraping vigorously at his palette. "No. Well, I am a lover in one sense — of everything that is beautiful, so far I can say yes — and I can say also that I'm a true knight to do battle for it, or hope to be. But —" He waited, and she turned her glowing, expectant face toward him. He looked down at her. "Ah, thus must I make Undine look at her lover." He thought he would try to remember the pose and expression.

"But what, Mr. Thorn?" she cried eagerly.

"I said I should tell you only half. You must guess the rest, Miss Joyful."

"Ah, ha! If this is half, there must be as much more. Surely you are a lover, surely. You must be, you know, to be any good."

He laughed out now. "You are a romantic maiden, Miss Joyful. Why must I be a lover to be any good?"

"Oh, you know you must. It's one of the things I think, but can't explain. To love beauty — that's all right; you must, to be an artist; but to be great, truly, must n't you be a lover of a soul? A soul must be greater than just beauty, or Undine would have been enough without it. She had wondrous beauty, you know. Everything around us has beauty — this has," she stooped and picked a violet from the cluster at her feet and held it out to him. He took it, but his eyes were fixed on her radiant face. He dropped it in his box and, gathering his scattered brushes, closed it in with them.

Joyful leaned back against the beech trunk, with the old wistful look in her eyes. "Oh, I have thought about it often and often. I know I am right, Mr. Thorn — I feel as if my mother had told me this."

Mark longed to learn more of the secret before he left her. He connected her outburst of tears with Jack Stoddard's return to Woodbury Center. Surely she must be saved from him, he thought. He put up his traps carefully, and then stood a moment looking down at her, his heavy brows drawn together.

"Yes, Miss Joyful, you're surely right in that, but now — let me ask you once more to go with that trouble of yours — whatever it is — to your 'Ladye Faire.' Tell her all about it, won't you?"

Again the color rushed into her face. "Oh, I can't — I can't! I could tell you easier than any one else — I don't know why — but I could."

"Then tell me," he said gladly, sitting again at her side. "Tell me as if you were my little true friend." Unconsciously he put out his hand to draw her toward him, but as quickly held it back.

"You know Nathanael Stoddard?"

"Yes."

"It's his brother. He's my lover — and oh, I don't want him to be. I'm afraid it's wrong of me, but I can't, I can't."

"Wrong of you?" exclaimed Mark, strangely moved, and still glad at heart. "Certainly not, my child. Why is it wrong?"

"Because — because — Oh, I've thought it all out — he must be a lover to be a good man, and so I'm afraid I ought to say yes, but I can't. I've known him always, too, and we've been friends, always — but I can't," she murmured, between sobs. "I might ask grandfather, but he'd be angry, I know, and say something cruel to Jack,

and it would be my fault. I can't tell grandmother, and I can't tell Elizabeth."

"My dear — dear — little friend," Mark said, and stopped. She looked up questioningly in his face. "What's the reason you can't tell Miss Drew or her mother, Miss Joyful?"

She turned her face away again. "Because I'm ashamed. Oh, dear, — can't you see? Why do you ask me?"

"But why should you be?"

"I don't know; but I am. I always thought maidens were very happy when they had lovers, but I'm not. Something must be wrong about it."

Mark pondered. Why should this lovely little one be left so alone? At last he said: "I'll tell you what I think about it. You should tell this Jack, or whoever he is, that he must do some great, good thing first, to prove that he is really a true lover, and a brave knight, as the maidens did of old. I think that's a very good way for maidens to do, myself — it would save them a great deal of unhappiness if they would all do it in these days — and you follow your own heart. Don't let him or any one else persuade you against it. Now remember. Perhaps he's no true lover. Let him show his colors first. I have no right to ask it — but I wish I might have your promise to this. It's very important for you." He rose and again stood looking down at her. "Miss Joyful, will you tell me or your 'Ladye Faire' if he continues to come to you?"

She gathered the rainbow clouds of her scarf about her, and tossed back her heavy hair. "Yes, yes," she said quickly, "I promise. He said he was going off to be gone a year, perhaps two, so I sha'n't see him for a long time. If

he were great like the knights of old, I would n't have to promise him anything yet, would I? But — if he should achieve some great good thing," she cried in dismay, "what should I do then?"

"Don't be in the least troubled about that now. Then will be soon enough," he replied, with inward amusement. "By that time you will have more wisdom, you know." He gave her his hand. "Thank you for this sitting. I've two more ideas for Undine. May I come to you again?"

"Indeed, yes. I love to stand for you. And — and — thank you for caring, and helping me."

Mark thought her a veritable Undine, as she passed on, now in shadow and now in light, toward the cottage. Then he started off through the woods, absorbed in an artist's reverie.

CHAPTER X

A MYSTERIOUS ASSAULT

"O! Goodly golden chayne, wherewith yfere
The vertues linked are in lovely wize;
And noble mindes of yore allyed were.
In brave persuitt of chevalrous emprize,
That none did others safety despize,
Nor aid envy to him, in need that stands;
But friendly each did others praise devise,
How to aduance with favourable hands,
As this good prence redeemed the Redcrosse knight from bands."

— *The Faerie Queene.*

It was near the middle of that afternoon, when Mr. Somers drove along the wagon way toward Heatherby's cove. The old man had brought home a small draught of fish, which Somers was to haul over to Willoughby Junction. Leisurely, as usual, he jogged along, giving an occasional flap to the reins as a reminder to the mare of his presence, which brought only the customary response of a jerk of the tail to the sleepy suggestion for more speed. The animal hung her head low, and seemed wholly occupied with the attentions of a single fly, earliest harbinger of the swarms to come later on, which buzzed about her ears with unremitting teasing, thus fulfilling its mission in life of keeping the mare awake, and her brain in a state of activity.

Suddenly the beast, hitherto supposed to be absolutely impervious to the sensation of fear, gave a frightened

short, and swerved violently to one side, galloping off at a tangent, with unwonted fire, until she brought up with a jerk as the spring wagon became locked between two trees.

"Whoa, Fan. Ye dum beast, what ails ye?" cried Mr. Somers, as he sat on the high seat, much shaken up by the quick bouncing over stumps and ruts. "Why, what ails ye, Fan?" he asked again, staring about, but the mare gave no answer. She had quickly recovered from her fright, and was struggling after a tuft of grass just beyond the reach of her nose.

"Must 'a been sump'n. Never see the critter act so." He climbed slowly down, and proceeded to tie her fast. "Ye can't get away 's I see, but the's no tellin' what ye will do, takin' such a contrary idee into ye're head." He went all about the animal, examining her headstall, her ears, and every strap and buckle. Then he stood and ruminated a few minutes. "Must 'a been sump'n scared her back there," he said, and sauntered away to investigate.

Nothing to be seen on the road — no sign of living thing. Presently he discovered the artist's color box and easel on the other side, and a little farther in the woods a gray heap lying beside a huge moss-covered bowlder, on a bed of ferns and wild-wood vines. As he approached the spot, a slow fear crept and grew upon him, until at last he bent over the heap, drawn, fascinated, with rising hair and chattering teeth, his whole lean frame quivering as with an ague.

A man was lying there as if he had been thrown. His coat had been spread over his face and hands, but his hair, clotted with blood, showed underneath the collar.

Somers stood paralyzed, not daring to lift the coat and look in a dead man's face. Then he turned and fled back to the road, and running frantically, set up a long quavering halloo — then another and another. At last a workman in the farthest recesses of the wood, whom Elizabeth had hired to trim out dead timber, heard the call. Its note of terror struck through his thick skull, and he came running.

"What ails ye?" cried Somers, dancing about in the middle of the road in a kind of frenzy. "What ails ye to be so long a-comin'? Look there. There's been a murder. Lift up the coat, will ye, 'nd see who 't is." The more phlegmatic workman went heavily forward and lifted the coat, while Somers stood aloof. Then he knelt and felt of the prostrate form — lifted the hands and dropped them again, and laid his ear to the heart.

"Come along, he's not dead," he said at last.

Then as suddenly as Mr. Somers' fear had come upon him it left him, and he grew sane, and his normal kindness and gentleness returned to him.

"Why, I declare 'ts that painter 'ts stoppin' over to our house. Take care. Don't haul him around till ye know where he's hurt. I'll back the horse out, 'nd we'll take him over to Heatherby's."

They looked about them and perceived that close to the road the bushes had been broken and trampled, and that the wounded man had been dragged across to the spot where they had found him. What could it all mean? Somers stirred himself, and after much backing and coaxing, and lifting of the hind end of the wagon about, the horse and vehicle were at last brought near where they could lift

the unconscious man in, and he was carried quickly on the short distance to Heatherby's cove.

"How's this?" called the old man, as he stood waiting beside his hamper of fish, which he had long since packed and brought from the boat. "Ain't ye putty late? Calc'late 't ye c'n make the night train?"

"I got a queer load f'r ye this time," cried Somers, in agitated tones. "Brought ye that painter 'bout done to death, yonder in th' woods."

"For the Land's sakes!" exclaimed grandmother Heatherby, bringing her ample figure close to the spring wagon. "It's Mr. Thorn. Whatever in this world! Joy, Joy," she called, running back to the gate, "put on the tea kettle 'nd get some boilin' water 's quick 's ye can. Here, father, you make these men stir themselves 'nd get him up to bed quick — 'nd Somers, you just hustle in that basket of fish 'nd get over to Willoughby Junction 's fast 's ye're mare 'll run, 'nd fetch Dr. Welch. He's gone over there to see a woman. Now be careful, father, don't let his head hang over so. Let me — there." And so the poor limp figure was gently carried up to the neatest little white spare room, and laid on the best bed.

And there he was restored to consciousness, and tenderly nursed, and when the doctor came and dressed his wounds, and said to the old lady, "It'll be several weeks before he can be removed. Shall I send you a nurse?" her reply was, "He's all right where he is, 'nd I never saw the time yet when I needed help takin' care of the sick."

"Marthy," called the old man, from the foot of the stairway, "hadn't you better let the doctor fetch along some one to help you?"

"No. I calc'late 't I 'm spry enough yet to nurse him, 'nd I 'd rather not have a stranger rummagin' th' house, 'nd standin' round in my way."

"Well, better let 'er have it 's she wants. Marthy always does know what 's best."

The doctor quietly stepped back into the room and closed the door after him. "Young man," he said, bending over Mark gravely, "is there anything you would like to say about this?"

Mark slowly opened his eyes, and a little smile lighted his pallid face. "No, I guess not, thank you." Then, noting a frown of suspicion darken the physician's face, he added weakly — "Better not say much, if you can avoid it, Doctor. You see — it was — a mistake. The fellow who — struck me — was — laboring under a — hallucination. I think he — he was scarcely responsible — and at any rate — I bear him no ill will."

But the doctor seemed not to be satisfied. "This is a grave matter, sir," he said. "I have a certain responsibility to discharge, and your kin folks may demand more of me than the explanation you have given."

"I see — but — I 'm in no danger — not dangerously hurt?"

"Not unless you have some internal injury that has not appeared yet, but two broken bones and a cracked skull show pretty rough handling."

"I was taken unawares, or he would n't have succeeded so well," said Mark, with a touch of chagrin.

"To strike a man unawares is foul play."

"Ah, yes. Well, never mind my relatives, Doctor, I'll take care of them, and as for any internal injuries. I

guess I'm all sound. What bones are broken? I must have been wandering when you fixed me up."

"Your upper left arm and collar bone, both. The arm is a bad fracture. What were you struck with?"

"I don't know. I hardly had time to look at the fellow before I was gone."

"You were struck on the arm and on the head. You must have broken your collar bone when you fell. Are you sure you know who attacked you?"

"Now, Doctor, about that—I know well enough, but I have good reasons—honorable ones—not for his sake, nor my own—. Nothing can be gained by following it up but trouble for parties who are in no way to blame. Just—kindly shut up—the fellows who found—me, will you? Tell them what you please—but shut them up. I trust to—your courtesy to do this for me."

Dr. Welch was a gray-haired, punctilious man of the old school, who was as much an institution in the village as the gray stone church, the rector, or the Drews. He bowed, took up his black leather case, and turned away. "Let me caution you against any excitement, or using any stimulant, other than that I have ordered in case the heart action runs low—which is not likely." Pausing at the door he looked back and hesitated, then gently closed it after him. "I'll call again in the morning," he said to Mrs. Heatherby. "Keep him in absolute quiet. Best not question him—he's weak now. Let him wait. Good day."

Day after day, in silence, Mark lay in the darkened room. Sometimes his mind wandered a little, but usually he was quite himself. Tended carefully by the old lady, who softly bustled in and out ministering to his necessities

with plump, motherly hands that had dimples in them like a baby's, Mark felt himself growing to love her, but he found words too mean and small to express his thanks, so he was still. "Hers is the sweet, placid courtesy with which angels must minister, only not so cold and far away," he thought. Once, when she was adjusting the bandages about his head, he kissed the hand which came so near his lips. The kiss brought a pink flush into the smooth old cheek.

"There, now, Mr. Thorn. Bless yer heart, ye 're bein' a baby."

"You 're too good to me, and I have no words with which to thank you."

Her firm mouth grew very tender, and her lip quivered slightly. "It 's not thanks I 'm needin'. Have n't I nursed a boy of my own? Now you just sleep a bit," and she went out. Ah, the secrets of a mother's heart! She was waiting on her boy — bringing him back to her touch — opening her heart to the stranger, because it had so long ached for him. Never before had Mark heard her mention him. She buried her sorrow in her great heart and was silent.

Sometimes Mark heard the old man's hearty voice downstairs, and sometimes, as he grew stronger, they visited together. He never saw Joyful, but he heard her light step pass his door many times a day. She seemed to have grown strangely silent. He never heard her sing, now, and scarcely could he hear the tones of her voice, it was so low. She was always busy at the household tasks, while her grandmother was caring for Mark. She was glad to do this and did not seem unhappy, but she was grave, and seemed to

have suddenly grown older. Her grandfather noticed the change, and thinking she was not well, persuaded her when he could, to come out with him while he worked about his boat and the little pier; but she spent most of her days quietly working in the cottage and garden, and every morning a few fresh flowers which she had gathered were brought up to Mark.

One day, about three weeks after his hurt, Joyful brought up his breakfast. It was the first time he had seen her, and his face lighted with pleasure. He was much stronger and had begun to feel that he need not cause so much trouble.

"It's a shame for you and your grandmother to have to wait on me in this way," he said. "I'm quite able to come down, and if I could only get the bandage off this arm, I could help myself."

"Grandmother won't be able to see you to-day," she replied. "But you must n't mind our waiting on you. It would be very cruel in us not to." She looked at him pityingly; his face had grown so white and thin with the confinement, and his dark, unshaven chin only made him look the more haggard. "It was dreadful for you to be hurt, and you might have died, if Mr. Somers had n't found you. Is there anything more I can bring you?" She stood looking critically at the food she had placed before him. "Oh, your poor hand is tied so you can't use it. I'll butter your roll and open your egg for you. Grandfather took his boat out yesterday. You know he must, now and then, while the weather's good. Sometimes, when he has a good catch, he stays late. He has n't come back yet, and so — you remember I told you a little about my

grandmother — it always makes her sick when he does n't come back at night — and she's so bad to-day. I hope he 'll come soon."

"I hope so, indeed, Miss Joyful. Thank you. Don't make yourself more trouble and work, waiting on me, when she needs you. I'm learning to be quite expert with my one hand. I'll be able to do a little work soon, I think. See here, Miss Joyful, why are you so grave? Is it any of the trouble we were speaking of that day?"

She smiled a wan little smile. "No, not that."

"Is it because you're afraid your grandfather has met with an accident?"

"No, Mr. Thorn. He always comes back, he's such a good sailor, and he always has Jasper with him."

"Who is Jasper?"

"He's a man who has sailed with grandfather for years and years. He lives in that little hut away out on the point. You've seen it. He never comes here, nor sees any one but grandfather. He always goes with him, and then leaves in his little boat and rows to the point when they come home, and grandfather comes in the rest of the way alone. We make his bread for him. He thinks he is a hermit."

"Does anybody ever visit him?"

"He won't let them in if they do — only grandfather."

"But that does n't tell me why you are sad, Miss Joyful. Is it your grandmother being ill?"

"No, she always has a spell when grandfather does n't come back when she thinks he should. That has to be. You see, she thinks all of her kindred are to die at sea — and all have but grandfather — only she has set her heart,

she says, on lying beside him on land at the last, like a Christian, with a headstone, and name and date on it."

"I mustn't keep you here talking when she may need you, but I wish you were not so grave. I liked the smiles and the laughter best. Won't you bring them back again? — or at least give me a reason for their disappearance?"

"She does n't need me. She only fastens herself in her room and sees no one, and won't eat. I know she takes out all the things that were my father's when he was a boy, and sits there with them all spread around her. Grandfather climbed up once and looked in at the window — we were so frightened because she stayed so long, and we heard no sound. She used to be worse, but now she only has a spell when he is off too long with the boat. We never talk about this, you know. They think in the village that she has dreadful headaches, and they call it 'Mrs. Heatherby's infirmity.' Only Elizabeth and her mother know."

Joyful had busied herself in setting his room in order, and now she shook out the muslin curtain, and tied it back, looking wistfully off over the cove. "There, there's grandfather's boat," she cried. "Can you see it? Jasper is just putting off for his point. And Than Stoddard's coming; I heard the gate close. He's been here every day, but he would n't see you until Dr. Welch thought best."

"Oh, send him up. But first, Miss Joyful, wait one moment — it is n't your grandmother — you've been used to that — have you any new trouble? Or is it the old one? Since you were good enough to tell me about it, you must forgive me for asking. It is because I care, and wish to see you happy. Has he been back here again?"

"No, Mr. Thorn. I almost wish he had. I'm — It's

because you were hurt. What was it? Who did it? Was it — Was it in any way my fault? I've been afraid —" She leaned trembling against the door post, and covered her face with her hands. "I don't like to say — but — I wish I knew who hurt you."

Mark's heart was stirred within him. Why had he ever drifted into her life? Was it to cause her trouble? "Your fault?" he cried. "Never! How could a man's quarrel be your fault? It was just an unfortunate circumstance that a fellow who fancied he had a grievance against me found me and attacked me so near your door. That I was thrown into the merciful hands of you good people may have saved my life. Will you think of that and be happy again? I believe no better thing could have happened to me than to have been brought here for peace. There, Nathanael is knocking. Go now, and stop fearing, and be happy for me, Miss Joyful."

She stepped back and took up the tray of dishes. Her eyelashes were wet with tears, but her lips smiled. "Thank you," she said, and bore them out.

"Thank you for a fine breakfast," he called after her. He marveled at himself, as he dropped his head back upon the pillow, that he could allow himself to be so wrought upon by that smiling, tearful glance. His heart beat rapidly — violently, and the wound in his head throbbed. "I must get out of this. I've grown too weak to be self-controlled," he thought. Then Nathanael entered, and he roused himself.

"This is good of you, Stoddard. You're just the man I want to see. Take that chair where I can look at you."

Nathanael slowly took the thin outstretched hand, and

looked down at him, holding it a moment before releasing it. Then he drew the chair closer to the bedside, and sat down. "I've been here every day to see how you were getting on, but now I see you, I don't know what to say."

"I'd give a goodly sum, if I had it, to spend a day with you in your barn studio. I'm wasting a deal of time these days. Look here. Can't you help me dress? A man grows weak, mentally and physically, lying abed. I've got to be stirring."

"I will, if it's best. Don't be rash. I shall go away again if my coming excites you. That blow on your head was a cruel one. There, be patient, I'll get your things. When you're strong enough I want to ask you some questions."

"Ask them now. I'm stronger than I look."

"You said once you'd be my friend, and I took you at your word. According to my way of looking at it, if you're my friend, you'll give me a chance to do something for you. I don't want to intrude in any way on your secrets, but I'd like to serve you. Is there — do you wish any action taken — or — well, there must be some reason for this, you know, and all I mean is, do you want a man's help?"

"Yes, I want a man's help this minute. Take out your knife and cut this bandage so I can get my arm free. I want to put on my coat, and I can't, with my arm tied in this shape."

"See here. If you're going to get into a frenzy, I'll leave. Did Dr. Welch say you might remove it to-day?"

"He said nothing, except that he would not return until Saturday. I can't wait three days longer, making trouble here. The old man's off, and Mrs. Heatherby's ill, and poor little Joyful has more care than she should. I'm no

baby. Cut it off, I say, and dress me up. There, that's right. You're the best fellow in the world."

"Better keep it up in the same position as much as possible. Here, now your coat's on, let me fix it up again." Nathanael pulled a large bandanna handkerchief from his pocket and carefully tied the arm in its former position. "This is one of Jack's foreign acquisitions. He bestowed it on me as a parting gift. Now, with your hollow eyes and bandit expression, it makes a fine effect; only you should have a similar one for your head."

Mark laughed inordinately. "I'm wondering what he would think if he knew you had used it to bind up my arm," he said.

"Oh, he'd say it was all right. He's the best-hearted fellow in the world."

Mark set his lips grimly. "He is, is he? I think I prefer his brother, myself."

"That's your choice, you know. No doubt Joyful thinks differently."

"Ah, there's where you're mistaken, friend." Mark had grown more pallid with his exertions, and now he sank back upon his bed, weak with pain.

"Haven't you any whisky? Where is it? Lie still, I'll find it. I knew you ought not to do this. You're not ready to get up yet, man."

"Yes, I am. There's the whisky. I'm all right. I must get out of doors. I'm not used to being shut in this way—it tells on a man's nerves."

"I'll come up here every day, and look after you, until you're able to be out, if you think you're being a burden to them."

"And leave your weeds growing, and your father on the rampage over them? Not a bit. I'm going back to Mrs. Somers' and take care of myself."

"Do you realize this is the first time I've seen you since you were hurt, and I can see how it has told on your strength and vitality? You've got to be patient, and I'm going to leave you now. Lie still and rest. Lie still, I say."

Mark muttered something under his breath, and began to remove the bandage from his head. Nathanael seized his hand.

"I will not allow you to go any farther," he cried. "Are you a fool? Lie still."

Mark resigned himself into the hands of his friend. "Yes, I'm a fool. You've hit it. But see here, Stoddard, I have something to talk to you about. If I can't go out, I must talk. Hand me that portfolio. Here are some letters. Sit down again and—wait—throw open that window. We'll have more air. Don't look so worried, man; I'm stronger than I look. It's that damned arm—it's paining me. I ought not to have disturbed it yet. Now this is what I want you to see. I've been doing a little correspondence about these inventions, and incidentally about the inventor, and here are three communications from friends in New York, and one in Boston. Wait, take this one first and tell me what you think of it."

Nathanael took the letters but did not open them. "Mr. Thorn," he said, "you are giving your thought and strength for me when I ought to be using mine for you. Let's drop my affairs. You have n't answered a question I asked when I first came in, and which I came here to ask. It's my opinion you evaded it."

Mark frowned. "Yes, if you will know, I did evade it, and I hoped you'd forget to repeat it. To tell the truth, I can't answer it. Don't be suspicious of me. I'm honorable, although —"

"I don't doubt it."

"Thank you. Although the appearances are against me, the affair seems questionable on both sides. I have no doubt there are great stories afloat in the house of Somers."

Nathanael smiled. "That need n't trouble you."

"It does n't. Give me your hand. You're gold. Now read the letters. One of them requires an immediate reply, as you will see."

Nathanael slowly read the typewritten sheet, then, appearing suddenly to wake as if from a dream, he re-read it in haste. The paper trembled in his hand, and as he looked up at Mark, his eyes sent out their blue flash. The whole man seemed to undergo an instant transformation, from a weary, heavy dreamer, to an alert, eager being, full of hope and nerve. Mark watched him with a pleased smile.

"Now, read the others," he said. "You see, I gave them to understand that they must take the burden of manufacture, giving you only the superintendence. Most inventors are impractical fellows. You must prove to them that you are not."

Nathanael glanced through the rest of the correspondence rapidly. He seemed no longer able to plod. He was awake.

"They wish to see me ; well, I wish to see them."

"Do you know anything about mining engineering?"

Nathanael replied with a laugh and a shrug, "I ought to. I worked hard enough to gain a little knowledge. You see, after I left Harvard, I corresponded with a man there who later became one of the professors in Boston Tech, and through him I got a special chance. I worked at home in that barn room — Heavens, how I worked! Yes, I have all a man can get, outside of the actual experience."

"How long did you work that way?"

"Two years — a little over two years, night and day."

"And carried on the farm, too?"

"And carried on the farm — indifferently well. I worked for the mere love of it without hope — except in a vague way — that, if the conditions of my life ever should change, I should then be ready. Sometimes I've felt as if my feet were grown rooted to that stone heap of a farm, while my heart and brain were — well — were winged for flight, yet could n't rise."

"I guess you were about right. Now, the thing for you to do is to see if you can get your feet out of the soil. Will you go to New York to see this man?"

Nathanael's face wore the brown and red coat of the sun and wind, except on the forehead where his hat had protected it. At Mark's question this fair white forehead became as red as his cheeks, and the veins stood out. He rose, and strode to the window, where he stood looking out on the sea, his elbows resting on the top of the sash, and his chin in his hands. Mark divined the hindrance.

"I could make it easy for you to go, but you would n't let me. You're as proud as Lucifer."

"No," said Nathanael, "I would n't."

"Ask your father for it."

"Never."

"Then borrow it from him, at a good round rate of interest."

"I made up my mind, when Jack returned this last time, that I'd make a change in my way of living. Jack's had — Well, that's nothing — neither here nor there, but as for father, I'm really no service to him now. We only irritate one another. I see my duty differently — conditions have changed — and I've changed, thanks to your companionship. I'll go to New York — I'll go, if I have to ride on freight trains, — walk, — crawl on my hands and knees."

Mark was reminded of Somers' description of the young man's mother. "I'll take this butter to the station. I'll have to crawl on my hands and knees," and he could imagine the same steel-blue lightning in her eyes.

"That's right," he cried, sitting up. "I'm not known among my friends as a man of much business ability, but they give me credit for a few brilliant streaks of common sense. They need an engineer at once — go at once. Maybe, before two weeks are over, you will be in New Mexico or Montana. Go to-day. Take the evening train from Willoughby Junction. Have you a man on the farm?"

"No."

"Never mind — leave the plow in the furrow and the hoe in the potato patch. Go."

Nathanael laughed. "No need to be quite so reckless. I can get Sam Hart to work it on shares, and — the only thing is to get the money — poor father. He can't understand. But I'll get it." His face darkened, with a mo-

mentary feeling of bitterness, as he thought of Jack's debts, and the money he had used for them.

"What can I do for you now, before I leave? This visit may be the death of you, as it is."

"Nothing. I'm strong enough to go downstairs. Guess I will. Give me your assistance, and — do you see anything of Heatherby's boat?"

"It's just drawing up to the pier."

"Then never mind about helping me down; I'll wait until he comes in. Give me my writing materials. We'll wire Downs and Hubert that you'll be there to-morrow. You see, if you get the position, you may be able to put your invention to practical use, and that will be a big thing for you. There, send that message before you see your father; then the die will be cast."

Nathanael took Mark's hand and released it reluctantly. "Sometime," he said, with emotion, "sometime I will show what I think now of you. At present — I am — your debtor — in one sense I shall always be."

As Mark lay back on his pillow and closed his eyes, he heard the gate swing after the young man's hurrying steps, and then he heard Joyful's voice speaking at her grandmother's door.

"Grandmother, grandmother. They're back all safe. See, look out of the window. They're taking out the fish. Come, grandmother, Mr. Thorn wants you, I know he does. There was no one but me to go to him this morning."

Evidently she received no answer, for Mark heard her go slowly away, and all the rest of that day he saw nothing of the old lady. Later, he persuaded Mr. Heatherby to

assist him below, and sat with the old man, while Joyful waited on them at the noon meal. Then he spent the rest of the day in the large rocker, and Joyful passed in and out, busy and neat, but still grave. Her grandfather let his big, jovial voice sound through the house, and Mark noticed that now and again he stood at the foot of the stairs and listened.

"I'm hearkin' to see if she turns her key in the door. It's always best for her to hear me about same's usual. She kind of gets over her spell by degrees so." Then he took a hoe and went out in the garden in sight of the old lady's window, and worked among his tomato vines, and sang, the afternoon long, until Somers came for the fish.

Nathanael was with him. He had had a stormy interview with his father, but had won at last. Then he had gone over to see Elizabeth. His eyes still shone from that visit, but he had not said to her what his heart wished. He would wait, and with the repression of his impulses a certain appearance of distance and coldness had come into his manner, of which he was himself unaware, but which she interpreted wrongly. She had been warmly commendatory of his action, and was full of praise for the friend who had so helped him. She had said something about Joyful, also, which he had vaguely acquiesced in, wondering why she said it.

Now as he jogged off in Somers' democrat wagon, his box of models and drawings rattling behind him, he was rehearsing to himself their short, hurried interview — every word she had said. Had he seen Joyful to-day? Yes, just a moment. What a pity her grandmother was under a cloud again — Why need Mr. Heatherby be off and stay that

way? But of course he must keep earning while he could. She had seen very little of Joy lately, and must have her with them more, as soon as Mr. Thorn was well enough. Joy must be very busy now. He opined she was — he was on his way there now; had Elizabeth any message to send? No, she would walk over there, to-morrow, perhaps.

He had wished to tell her more of his hopes, but she had held him back, even while her strong, warm nature was yearning toward him. He felt conflicting influences both repelling and drawing him, and at the gate was moved to return, in the hope of securing a firmer foothold within the fortress of her gentle reserve. Might — might he drop her a line? Certainly, she would be interested to hear. And when he returned he might — he hoped he would have a more important thing to tell her — he should come to her at once? Indeed yes, and while he was away would he remember her lecture, and not hold himself too cheaply? He would not forget, nor ever hold himself cheaply again, while she saw worth in him.

Had he gone too far? Would she resent? He trembled to fall at her feet — to do any wild act to break her calm; but the fatal fetters of his training and inheritance held him stiff, with head erect. He could only extend his hand with conventional dignity; yet, as his fingers closed over hers she felt the tremor of vital energy, and looked quickly into the blue eyes fixed on her face.

Why should he look at her in that way? He should keep such glances for Joyful. And so they parted.

CHAPTER XI

CONFLICTING SENTIMENTS

"O foolish physick, and unfruitfull paine,
That heals up one, and makes another wound !
She has hurt thigh to him recurd againe,
But hurt his hart, the which before was sound,
Through an unwary dart which did rebound
From her faire eyes and gracious countenance."

— *The Faerie Queene.*

THE next morning Mark did not rise. He had been rash the day before, and his head troubled him ; but he felt more at ease, for he heard Joyful's song under his window again, as he had heard it that first morning, which now seemed so long ago.

Then the trees were bare, now even the tardy locust was in full bloom. The sweet scent of the blossoms came in at the window, and a drunken bee droned his complaint as he butted his head against the glass. Mark watched the heavy fellow drowsily. Why had he come in there, in the first place, and in the next, why did he stay when he had only to crawl round the edge of the sash and spread his wings in absolute freedom? He was just going to draw a vague comparison between the bee and himself, when he perceived his good angel and nurse looking smilingly down on him.

She showed no trace of her aberration of the day before.

Either she chose to ignore it, or was unaware of it. She seemed eminently sane, and her normal self, while bathing his face and his free hand, and chatted cheerily.

She complained of his matted hair. It had not been so before; what had he been doing overnight? How ever had he got his arm free. Men were so impatient! He ought not to have done a thing without the doctor's orders. Now, more'n likely, it would be weeks longer getting well. Had father cut the bandage for him? It would be just like father to do anything on earth. He'd indulge Joy to her death.

Mark assured her it was entirely his own fault. He had persuaded Nathanael to do it.

The dear old lady was mystified and troubled. "Than Stoddard's brought your mail over every day, but I would n't let him up till I saw you strong enough, 'nd here he's slipped in 'nd helped off this bandage without my seein' him. He might 'a known better, even if you did n't."

Mark liked her motherly scolding, and smiled up at her.

"There now!" she went on, smoothing his bed and arranging his pillows. "You're nothing but a great boy, for all you reach most across the room. How your bed is torn up! You must 'a been dreadfully restless."

"I'm getting well, and it's time you turned me out."

"Just you keep your patience till I do." She spied the bee and helped it over the window sash and out. "It's the locust't draws them. The tree's alive and humming with them."

Mark refrained from making any further allusion to the doings of the previous day. He lay quietly gazing out at the serene sky, and up at the fragrant, swarming tree. He could hear the buzzing of myriad wings, like a distant.

vibrant undertone of many violins, now louder, now softer, as the breeze playing among the leaves of the silver-leaf poplar rose and fell. Now and again a clear note of Joyful's song, as she sewed under the trees, gave voice to the quivering harmony, and a sense of absolute peace entered into his very soul — a delicious sense of rest.

There were letters lying under his hand unopened. He dreaded to allow any intrusion from the world without. The old lady had gone, carrying his breakfast dishes with her, and he heard the light clatter as she washed them below in the open summer kitchen. Tempted by Joyful's song, he rose and looked down at her as she sat on the ground, leaning against the rough black trunk of the old poplar, intent on her work. She was making buttonholes in the bands of blue gingham aprons, and she wore the pink dimity frock Elizabeth had fashioned for her, cut square at the neck, and frilled, showing her round, white throat. She looked like a belated apple blossom that had drifted down from somewhere out of the skies.

Weak and weary, he lay down again, and closed his eyes, shutting thus within himself the beautiful picture. Mechanically his hand closed over one of the unopened letters, crushing the delicately scented missive which he had been idly fingering all the morning. Presently he roused himself. This lotus dream of peace must end, however sweet in the passing. The poem of this summer morning, with the girl under the trees sewing on blue aprons for its theme, must remain for him a poem only, but a poem forever.

He tore the envelope roughly off and tossed it aside, and smoothed the crumpled sheets of fine linen paper.

"Dearest Mark," it began. ("So I am her dearest

Mark of them all, am I?" He smiled, and read on. "You bad, perfectly dear, lovable, silly boy! To run away in a fit of the sulks and hide yourself there in the woods. To tell the truth, dear, I did not think you cared for anything I might say. You always treat me with such an air of superiority when we approach subjects of art, that now I'm glad I said it, just to discover that you do care for my opinion sometimes. I am so flattered that I freely forgive you, Mark dear, for running away. Indeed, I could go into a rhapsody over it, only I have n't time. I have such a pleasant thing to tell you, and I'm afraid some one else may tell it first.

"Listen, Mark. The picture I call mine, because I have always loved it so—you remember the picture of Dawn—is sold!!! Mrs. St. Clare Thomas bought it, I don't know for how much, but not half what it was worth, no doubt. She could give any price for a thing, only she loves her money more than she loves art.

"Do you wonder, dear, that I am happy? Every success that comes to you brings nearer our wedding day, Mark, and our lovely trip to the Orient. It was settled we should go there, was it not? I'm so glad it was not your brush hand that was hurt. You forgot to tell us how the accident happened. Mamma Kate wanted to take the next train and hunt you up, but I laughed her out of it.

"The idea of her giving up Newport, and the yachting trip with the Scott Stevens party, just because you had hurt your arm in some reckless way! Of course if you had n't written it was nothing serious, we would both have flown to you, but she would drop everything and run, if you so much as hurt your little finger.

"To go back to that unfortunate exhibit. Mark, I know that your work is fine, as well as you do — I know it better than you do. That is why I so insist that you should do something that will give you a name. All you lack is a name. I saw a lot of Whistlers in New York last week, and really, dear — I would n't have any one but you hear me say this — but — I think yours far better work. There! What do you think of that? If it were not for the magical name, the crowd who were gazing at them would never have seen them at all. They just take the catalogue and hunt up the *names* and never look at anything else. Of course, Mark, we all do that — it's natural. But as long as it is so, you should recognize the fact, and benefit by it.

"Those quiet artistic things you do are very beautiful, and they are the sort of things one would want to hang in one's house, but they are not bold enough to make the crowd look twice at them. When you have a name, dear, then you can be as truly artistic as you please, or you can be lazy and do careless things, as most of them do when they become celebrated; you'll be a success, all the same, and what's more, your things will sell, and that is the great point, after all, when one's income is as limited as yours.

"I have been thinking and planning for our Oriental trip, and studying modern Mahomedanism. It is most fascinating. All our best people are going into some kind of orientalism nowadays. A religious cult of some kind seems absolutely necessary to the human soul, and Christian Science is become so commonplace, now that everybody has taken it up — I would almost rather go in for old-fashioned Methodism, for the mere sake of being unique.

"I have so much to do these days that it is no wonder I

write you so seldom. Being the head of our philanthropy department throws great responsibility on me, and my heart aches so for poor humanity all about me, that sometimes I feel almost like giving up that yachting trip, just to stay here and see that some of our more important schemes for the uplift of the masses are carried out.

"Mamma Kate says they will only fall down again harder than ever if we do it for them, and don't make them uplift themselves, but such sentiments are very old-fashioned, and not at all according to altruistic thought.

"But to go back to our wedding and the Oriental trip—(you will try to sell more pictures soon, so we may feel sure of it, as long as you are so proud, and won't allow me to help?) Over there you'll find such splendid subjects to paint—but you know more about that than I can tell you—only I'm thinking what tremendous things you can do there. Everything in America is so commonplace, with no flavor of mystery about it—none of the poetry of the past still clinging to it. It is just the same in art as it is with our religion here. The mystery and poetry have all been taken out, and we are given only the same old dogmas and bare bones which the Puritans gnawed on. The spiritual nature craves spiritual food, and that is what I am getting now. Read the Arabic inscription on the back of the unmounted photograph I have inclosed. Those words have a mystic significance, dear, and every time you look at the face I want you to read those words, or better still, keep them in mind, and repeat them over and over in your heart with your eyes closed to all material things, and let only your spirit remain open and receptive to the inpouring of the great spiritual tide that will flow in on you. Those words will

be a source of inspiration and help, and will lead you to the doing of great things in your art, which will result in the true uplift of your fellows.

"That is what I am living for now, Mark, wholly, and I wish you could make your aims the same, so that our souls may be completely in accord, and both enwrapped and infiltrated throughout with the divine spiritual influx. Oh, Mark, this is rapture. This is in the highest sense bliss. You may not understand the words, but give no heed to that. You must feel that they mean to your soul ecstasy supreme, and repeat them as I tell you — and by the way — tell me how you like the picture. I had it taken last week.

"As soon as you get this, write us more particularly about your accident. We are wild to know. Were you alone, and what on earth were you doing? Next week we go to Newport, and a few weeks later we join the Scott Stevens yachting party, I don't know how long to be gone, but a month anyway, so if you don't come down to Newport I won't see you until fall. Think of it! Can you wait so long?

"Your true love, as always, Mark,

"LOUISE TREMONT PARSONS."

Mark looked in the envelope for the picture he had missed. There it was, crumpled and torn by his nervous fingers. "Very careless of me," he murmured, as he smoothed out the creases, and fitted the torn edges together. "Yes, it's an exquisite head, and well taken, too." He smiled as he turned it over, and spelled out the Arabic incantation she had inscribed there for his spiritual "uplift." "If it were Greek, I might make a stab at a translation," he thought.

"Ah, well, no harm." As long as an understanding of it was entirely unnecessary, he would ask for a little flour paste, and mount it on a card for the better preservation of the beautiful face. He could make up a little gibberish of his own, and repeat it with closed eyes for his "spiritual uplift." He laid the picture smoothly between the leaves of his notebook and sighed. Yes, Louise was right. He must stop this dreaming and idling — but what a delicious time of peace it had been! Indeed, it was fortunate his brush hand was unhurt. This very afternoon he would work, if his head would let him — and he did. He made another drawing while Joyful posed, and they passed a merry hour, for Mark insisted that this was to be a love scene, and Joyful was to gaze into the face of her knight; but as there was no knightly lover at hand, her grandfather was pressed into the service, and she gazed into the old man's face quite to Mark's satisfaction.

"I declare! You're makin' a regular fool of father," the old lady said, as she looked with pleased expression at the two seated under the tree. "And you're puttin' notions into the child's head, too, pretendin' she's lookin' at her lover."

"Why, I am, grandmother," cried Joyful, reaching up to pat the genial old face. "May we see it now, Mr. Thorn?"

"Certainly."

"Why, you have n't put in the lover at all. You have only me."

The old man laughed uproariously. "What did you think, Joy — were you going to have him make a theater acterin' knight out o' your gran'-daddy?"

"Now you need n't laugh. You're so straight and tall, I

know you were just a handsome young knight once; was n't he, grandmother? And you're a fine old one now, if you only had armor and a steed." She laughed merrily, the happy, ringing laugh Mark had been longing to hear again. "Let me make the knight," she said, scizing a piece of chalk and seating herself on Mark's stool, before the easel. "You sit where grandfather did, Mr. Thorn, and, grandmother, you sit on the stool at his feet, so he can look down at you."

"Oh, go along and make your knight," said the old lady good-humoredly. "I guess Mr. Thorn c'n set 'nd look down without havin' me there."

"Not so hard to look down at you like a lover, Mrs. Heatherby. There's more truth than poetry in Miss Joyful's suggestion. Go ahead, Miss Joyful. We'll pretend your grandmother is on this stool. Now, how will this do?"

"I will make the bandage around your head first. That will show you are a valiant knight, and have suffered wounds for your lady's sake." Their eyes met, and in the same instant she regretted her words, and bit her lip in her chagrin, and dropped her hands in her lap.

"Go on, go on, Miss Joyful. Make me into a hero—come."

"No—that would never do for Undine's lover. He was very careful never to let himself get hurt. He was a selfish knight." She tossed the chalk back in the box and rose. The color had left her face, and she looked sad and drooping.

Her grandfather stretched his arms above his head. "Well, I declare. I believe sitting still 's hard work. I'm hungry. How is it with you, Mr. Thorn?"

"I'm hungry, too; but that's my usual condition these days."

Joyful left them, turning away with a sense of relief, for she felt Mark's eyes on her face. Soon she returned with a lunch of scalloped tea cakes and milk, such as she had brought Mark that first evening. He sat regarding his work critically. He had felt her embarrassment, and his mood had changed. What was he doing, lingering here? He was no longer so helpless that he could not look after himself, and he would go back to his barn studio.

As Joyful left them enjoying their lunch, her grandfather called after her to stay.

"I don't care for anything, grand-daddy," she said, smiling back at him. "If you don't need me any more, Mr. Thorn, I guess I'll go in."

Mark was troubled. He would have liked to paint another hour, but he would not detain her. He sat awhile longer, chatting with the old man, and then tried to work again, but found it impossible. He gathered his things together and strolled off to the bluff, and sat gazing at the sea for the rest of the day — tortured and saddened by one of his blackest moods. He took out the little picture of Louise and studied it line by line. For years her exquisite combination of line and color had filled his artist sense with complete satisfaction. It was all he had ever particularly cared for in a woman — any woman other than his mother. He had always been able to dispel a moody fit by gazing at her face, and dreaming it his for all time — a beauty to be never wearied of, nor wasted. He thought now of the time he had been frenzied to possess it — had been enslaved by it, and smiled. Men never looked at her once without seeking to look again. Should he run down to Newport? He thought he would better — it would shake off the spell

that was growing on him here. It would n't do to be laid up here another day. Only for the bandage on his head, he would be already gone. He must get rid of it.

He looked up and saw Joyful coming slowly toward him through the blueberry pasture. Her dress clung about her supple, girlish limbs, and the blueberry bushes caught at it as if with detaining fingers, as she walked. Mark hastily buttoned the picture and the notebook inside his coat, fumblingly, for his hurt arm was still tied across his breast. Underneath it he felt the rising tumult of conflicting emotions, and tried to lay the quickened beating of his heart to his present weakness. He ground his teeth, and set his face sternly toward the sea.

"Will you come to supper, Mr. Thorn?" she called, as she drew nearer.

"Yes, gladly," he replied, rising and still looking at the sea.

"Is n't it beautiful now?" she said, standing beside him. "But oh, it's more beautiful still, when the moon comes up over there, away on the edge, and makes a wide golden road through the midst of the sea to your very feet." Then the thought of the last time she had seen it thus came to her, and a crimson flood dyed her face.

"I know how beautiful it must be. I have seen it so on the Mediterranean Sea at midnight, when the sky was black and covered thick with stars. How would you like to go there and see it?" He looked down into her face, and thought the flush of red was there for him. It stirred his heart more violently, and again he felt the wound in his head throb. He did not resist the impulse to take a step nearer her and bend lower, until their eyes met. "Tell me, how would you like to go there, Miss Joyful?"

The gaze which met his was frank and impersonal. She had ceased remembering Jack, and was thinking of the Mediterranean Sea and the stars.

"Oh, I would like it. Mother used to tell me about it, but —"

"But what, little friend?" he said gently.

"I was thinking how glad I am that it is beautiful here, too. I'm always glad when the world is beautiful. Are n't you?"

"Yes, yes," he said. But he spoke sadly, and turned away. Presently he took her hand and pulled her playfully toward the house. "Come," he said, "your grandmother will be after us both, if we don't hurry."

"Mr. Thorn! You are tired. You have done too much to-day."

"Why so, Miss Joyful?" His fingers tightened over hers as he led her on.

"I can feel your hand tremble. You see you have only one hand now, and you use it too much."

He laughed heartily. "It is not weariness that makes it shake. I'm stronger than I've been for days." But he was angry with himself, and released her hand from his grasp.

"Then why does it shake?"

"God knows!" he said, and his face darkened as he strode rapidly on toward the cottage.

CHAPTER XII

THE END OF AN IDYLL

"Now, good Cesario, but that piece of song,
That old and antique song we heard last night;
Methinks it did relieve my passion much,
More than light airs and recollected terms
Of these most brisk and giddy-paced times.
Hark it, Cesario, it is old and plain.
The knitters and the spinners in the sun
And the free maids that weave their thread with bones
Do use to chant it."

—SHAKESPEARE.

A RAW, chill wind was driving insistently against Mark's windowpanes when he awoke next morning. He tried to rise, but the wound in his head still throbbed, and the weather seemed to be sending arrows of pain through his healing bones. With a groan of dismay he relaxed his tense muscles and lay back again on his pillow. Certainly the elements were against him, but this one thing he could do. He would keep his room, even though it might make a little more trouble for his kind old hostess. He would not allow himself again to become the victim of his own emotions.

He smiled as he re-read Louise Parsons' letter. "Everything is so commonplace here in America, with no flavor of mystery about it — none of the poetry of the past still clinging to it." As he read, he looked out and saw Joyful, with a little red shawl over her head, walking among the rosebushes and searching beneath them. What was she

after? Ah, it was the old white hen who had come off her nest with a brood of young ducklings. Mark watched with interest while Joyful secured the scolding, ruffled old fowl in her arm, and then gathered up the tottering little brood in her apron and carried them to the friendly shelter of the shed, and fastened them in.

He saw her come out and pause a moment, with her face lifted to the driving rain, flushed, and radiant, and wholesome. She stretched out her hands, as if to feel the wind and rain beat on her bare arms, and smiled. What was she dreaming about? No mystery in America? No flavor of the past? Why, there was a whole heaven of mystery in that child's soul, and the past hung its rainbow tints around her like tissue of amethyst and gold.

Of course there was no poetry and no mystery in Newport. What was Louise doing there, and why would Aunt Kate haunt those resorts? Money, an up-to-date set, a yachting trip with a lot of imitative apes, and — a sweet longing for poetry and mystery. Mark laughed aloud, but not pleasantly, and Mrs. Heatherby came in with his breakfast.

"Laughin' 's good to hear, when it 's real laughin', Mr. Thorn." She set the tray beside his bed, and looked down at him kindly. "Trying to make the best of a bad day?"

"Yes. There 's nothing else to do."

"You 'll feel better when you 've had your coffee. It 's in for an all-day rain, I 'm thinkin'."

"I 'm afraid so, and this weather sets my head thumping and plays the devil with my broken bones. I 'll just keep the room to-day, and to-morrow, if it holds up, I must get back to my work."

The old lady's face clouded. "Back! to Somers'? There's nobody there to look after you, 'nd you might have a set-back. I've always noticed there's never anything gained by gettin' in a fret."

"No, but I've troubled you long enough, and received more than I can ever repay. Besides, a man must work. He can't lie around and think about himself all day, and live."

"P'raps so. Men 're impatient creatures by nature. I often wonder at 'em—but there! If they wan't, they would n't be good for anything. Somers, he's the only patient creature I ever saw, 'nd I always feel like gettin' after him with a sharp stick."

"He served me a good turn when he brought me here."

"Yes, 'nd if he had n't been a little up 'nd coming for once in his life, he'd 'a been too late."

"This breakfast is good. One more such, and I must submit myself to Mrs. Somers' ministrations again. I've been a fortunate fellow these few weeks past. Won't you just examine this bandage, and see if I can dispense with it? I'm too vain to appear in the street with my head tied up."

"I guess you be. Anybody c'n see that in your eye. Well, I like a little vanity in a man, myself. It's good for 'em 'nd keeps 'em young. I've always noticed 't if a man gets where he don't care how he looks, or what folks think of him, he's pretty low down. No matter what he's been, or what he might be, he's goin' downhill, if he ain't already at th' bottom. Now you eat your breakfast 'nd stop fussing. Bein' impatient and a bit vain's all right, but frettin' never helped a body to a thing. It just drags a man all out, 'nd wastes his strength, 'nd it's a regular man's

failin', too, frettin' is. Wait till I take your dishes down, 'nd get your room red up 'nd then we'll see 'f it's healed where the Doctor took the stitches out."

When the dear old lady went downstairs with the breakfast tray, she sent her husband up to visit with Mark for a while. "Sometimes it's kind o' quietin' to a sick person's nerves to be talked to, 'nd sometimes it riles 'em all up. You c'n watch out, 'nd if you see him getting restless, better leave him to himself awhile — 'nd if he wants that bandage off his head, you kind of divert him. He better leave it on till to-morrow, anyway. If you don't help him, he can't do much with the one hand; he can't get the other up to his head yet."

Thus did the good people connive for his physical well-being, and the long day of rain slipped by, and another and another, ere, with bandages removed and hair arranged over the wound above his temple, he walked forth from his refuge, a well-mended man.

A letter from Nathanael awaited Mark at the boarding house, a letter full of enthusiasm and hope. "I am to start for Colorado to-morrow," it ran. "My expenses there are to be paid. If, after looking over the ground, I am willing to undertake the work, I begin my duties at once. If not, I pay my own expenses home again, should I choose to return. More likely I would prefer to remain and seek some other opportunity. This you have done for me. You have set me free in more ways than one. Never again can I become the moping, moody fool you found me. I am awake at last; the freedom of the West will do the rest for me. If I take the position, I will be able to pay father the money he loaned me in six months' time. As for my invention, that is

yet to be developed. Whether it may be made of any practical value to the mine owners remains to be seen. I am to have the privilege of introducing it if it is, and my fortune is made; if not, at the least I am a free man, and will have my salary, and beyond that lies the hope of my life. You know what that is—you, only, my friend. God bless you.

"I hope your broken bones are mended and your head whole. I wish I had the villain who did that job for you under my heel. The fact that I was not allowed to do anything about it still rankles within me." Mark smiled. "Bless his heart, he's all right; but if he ever gets the fellow under his heel, it won't be I who put him there."

Then he gathered the other letters that were lying at his hand and tore them rapidly open, one after another. A bill for rental of studio, a bill for framing, a check from the sale of the picture Louise had written him about. A note from a dealer, and another check for \$200. This he endorsed to Mrs. Heatherby, and inclosed in a letter addressed to her. Then he went down and bore the scrutiny and gossip of the boarding-house table. It was now midsummer, and the guests who usually filled that abode during the warm months had arrived. These consisted for the most part of a few well-dressed and exceedingly commonplace women, who were there because their husbands could come out Saturdays, and spend their Sundays fishing, without being put to the greater expense of the larger watering places. These women spent most of their time sitting out in the yard under the apple trees, where Mark first saw Jane. There they sewed and talked a continual stream of inconsequent chatter with which they seemed to be well satisfied.

Mark found his room hot and stuffy. He thought the windows could not have been opened since he was last there. He tried to raise one, but found it impossible to pull back the snap fastening and lift the sash at the same time with but one sound arm. He felt like smashing the panes through, but restrained himself, and managed after a struggle to raise the window enough to let in a little air and several flies, which buzzed about his face irritatingly when he stretched himself at last on the bed, exhausted with heat and the mental depression which had taken possession of him when he left the Heatherby cottage.

For a long time he lay quiet, yet unresting, unrefreshed. The voices of the women in the little orchard yard came up to him, and now and then the shrill, discordant note of Jane Somers' laugh; and the flies continued to buzz about his face, or spin round and round and bump themselves aimlessly against the ceiling.

"The world is full of such flies," he thought. "They wander about on the earth, exist, reproduce their kind, and die. They bump hideously against circumstances which they never try to shape or mold to any purpose. They hang upon the footsteps of time and serve no end in life, until their bodies turn into dust for the feeding of new generations."

He rose, dashed water over his head and face, and went out. He felt he should turn into one of the flies if he remained there a moment longer. Below the distant horizon a thunder-storm was brewing and muttering, and the world seemed stilled by the ominous threat. Mark thought he would go to his barn studio, but instead he turned his steps towards the Drews'.

He laughed as he walked up the path, bare-headed, and

shook the first drops of the coming storm from his hair. Elizabeth stood in the doorway.

"Has the storm driven you back to us?" she said. "Then the storm is welcome, Mr. Thorn." She was disarmed. She had meant to treat him with a measure of coldness when next they met, as the mystery of his hurt and reticence about it had wrought disagreeably upon her. It was not a pleasant thing to think about. Why could n't he have told Nathanael at least enough to silence the rumors rife in the village? She distrusted concealment; but now his frank manner and his pallor and evident weariness pleaded for him. She threw caution to the winds and was charmingly cordial.

"Mother, here is Mr. Thorn. We're so glad you are out again. The piazza is coolest. Shall we sit there till the storm breaks? Take this chair, and lean your head back."

"Thank you. You remember the first time I ever sat on this piazza, I sought it as a refuge? I have the same reason for seeking it now, but not from the storm this time."

"Thee is not at the Heatherbys' now, then?"

"You are gifted with divination, Mrs. Drew. To hear a refined voice or a strain of music was my sore need."

"Thee is welcome, heartily welcome. We have missed thee, Mr. Thorn."

"It is more than kind of you to tell me so. There are black moments that come to a man sometimes, a man like myself, without a home, when to know that any living being would miss him—is—all there is."

"A man like thee, with the power of friendship in his soul, has always that consolation. Thee did much for Mr. Stoddard."

"Nathanael? Have you heard from him, too?"

Mark drew out his letter with a smile. "He's all right now. What he needed was a chance."

"And that thee gave him. It was much. Yes, he wrote us he had gone West, not to return."

"Why should he return? There was nothing for him here," said Elizabeth, going to the piano. "What shall it be, Mr. Thorn?"

"Oh, thank you. Schumann first, after that whatever you like. The last evening I was here you played something I have wanted to hear ever since. Joyful used to sing the air when she sat under the trees sewing."

"Was it this?" She began playing softly.

"Yes, yes." He leaned back contentedly and listened with closed eyes. His senses yielded to the charm of Schumann's exquisite subtlety of sentiment, and the revelation of the music seemed to him to be Joyful Heatherby—her face, with its changing lights of understanding, her voice, her movements. He saw her walking toward him through the blueberry pasture, or standing for him in a rain of golden light as Undine. He saw her looking up into his face with troubled, tearful eyes. He saw her as she moved about the room, shaking out the white curtains and tying them back. He saw her in the dusk of evening, as on that first night she sat on the porch step holding the tuft of lilac bloom to her face and gazing up at the black sky. Child she was then, a rare, fair child, and in these few short weeks he had watched the sweet growth of womanhood in her. As the sultry heat closed around him, and the storm muttered low, the rhythm and swing and intertwined harmonies searched him through. He felt himself yearning for her—longing for her with growing intensity. He rose and

stretched out his arm as if to feel for the still scattering drops of rain, but he was conscious the act was prompted by the wish to reach out for her and draw her toward him. He turned and strode into the room where Elizabeth sat, and stood by the piano, watching her fingers.

"What does that make you think of?" he asked.

"The world as it is just now, when everything is sweet and faint, and waiting and expectant. Pretty soon the storm will come, and the reviving. There!" She struck the last chords most delicately and lightly. "Now — everything is waiting." She dropped her hands in her lap and looked up at him. He was very pale, and seemed weary.

"Yes, everything is waiting. We are all waiting, I imagine, Nathanael out West — he is waiting there, and we here. What are we all waiting for?" He smiled, and crossed over to the couch where her mother lay, and sat down beside her.

Elizabeth smiled also. She was conscious of a letter from Nathanael which she had placed in the bosom of her dress. While he had said nothing in it that could be construed into a sentiment toward herself, yet through it all had run an undercurrent to be felt, although unexpressed, which had caused her to place it there and keep it by her. In her heart she knew him to be waiting — but for what? Was it for Joyful Heatherby to grow up? He had never said so — indeed, he had not mentioned the child of late — and yet —.

Mark could have answered her thought, but with a fatality that often attends such tense mental conditions he only said, —

"Have you seen Joyful lately?"

"Not very lately; why?" In her heart she said:

"The mere mention of Nathanael makes him think of her.

There must be a reason for their being coupled together in his mind" — of course she was right in her surmise — "Nathanael loves Joyful."

"Because," Mark replied, "she has seemed pensive, almost sad, these few weeks past."

"Yes, and she loves Nathanael," she thought; "why else should she be sad at his going?" But aloud she said, "When his leaving here is the best thing in the world for him, why should she be sad?"

Mark looked up in surprise. "Whose leaving? Jack's?"

"No, Nathanael's."

"Oh, I don't think she's thought twice over his going. Why should she?"

"Then why should she be sad?" she reiterated.

Mark gave her a keen glance. "The man is nearer his hope than he imagines," he thought. "Why, indeed?" he asked. "Or rather, why do you think of him in connection with her sadness?"

Elizabeth felt she had betrayed herself. She rose and looked out. The rain was now pelting loudly on the piazza roof. The air had taken on a sudden chill, and she closed the door.

"That cool, damp breeze is refreshing, but we would better shut it out. After the heat and your walk, it may be too much for you."

He laughed. "That's what they have been doing at the Heatherbys' — making a baby of me. I must go where people won't be so kind. It spoils a man."

Mrs. Drew smiled. "Does thee really think thee is telling the truth?"

"No, I'm not. But to be so patiently and kindly cared

for, to be mothered as that dear old lady has mothered me, has a tendency to produce a sort of inertia of contentment. A man likes it just as a cat likes a soft cushion, and — I'm no hero."

"It has done thee no harm. What will thee do now? Go on with the work in thy barn loft?"

"I don't know. The old man may turn me out, now that his son is gone. No, I'll try a fashionable watering place for a while. Not that it really suits my present humor, but from a sense of duty."

"Does duty call thee there? Does thee like that sort of thing?"

"Yes, and no," he replied, meditatively. He was looking at Elizabeth, who had seated herself near the window with some light embroidery. A dark doorway, crimson curtained, was behind her, and her head was brought into strong relief against it, as she bent forward over her work in the light. He had never seen red hair relieved by just such a background, yet how beautiful it was. He must try it. "Since you and your daughter have often enjoyed such places, it would hardly be courteous of me to express my detestation of them; but you must make allowances for me — an artist is more or less of a barbarian at the best. As for duty, my only living relative is there. I must go and prove to her that I am not a helpless cripple. She writes me she will not believe to the contrary until she sees me. She really loves me, and as she is the only one who unfeignedly does, it is her right that I go to her."

They all remained silent for a time, while the rain descended furiously. Then Elizabeth rose and left them, but presently returned with tea and biscuit.

"It has grown so much cooler I thought I would venture," she said, serving Mark with a steaming cup.

"I am grateful for it. The fury of this storm will soon spend itself. I sha' n't be thrown on your kindness so long as I was that first time." He smiled. "That rainy day was a godsend to me. So is this, for that matter."

"It brought us pleasure also," said Elizabeth. "When do you go to Newport?"

"To-morrow." He made a wry grimace. "I shall be in a very different atmosphere there."

"Why do you go, if you disapprove of it so much?"

"To please my aunt, and incidentally for certain worldly reasons. The impecunious artist must keep in touch, in a measure, with the amassers and spenders of wealth. He must keep abreast of the fads of the day, and know whether purples or greens are the prevailing color. He must stand subserviently ready to be taken up and made a fad, of himself, that he may ride to fame on the high tide of popularity, all sails set — all canvas, I should say; moreover, I shall disappoint a friend of mine — if I don't show up at Newport sometime during the season."

The storm was abating, and he rose and went out on the piazza. "There is clear sky in the west," he said, as he resumed his seat. "When it reaches the zenith, I must go."

"Thee may help me to my chair," said Mrs. Drew. "Give me thy well arm. It is many years since I have crossed a room without the aid of a friend's arm, or of my friend the stick, which thee has placed so carefully over there in the corner, where I can't reach it."

"I'm glad I did. I prefer to take the place of your stick. But now I'll put it beside you, as I sha' n't be here to have

the pleasure — for a long time, I fear. How fast it is clearing! I must be gone before the sun comes out hot again."

"I did n't like the worldly speech thee made a moment since," she said, looking up at him with a smile on her fine old face.

"No? neither did I," he said, with a laugh.

"I don't think Mr. Thorn meant it, mother."

"I'm afraid I meant too much of it, Miss Drew."

"Thee can't persuade thy aunt that thee is well until thee looks more rugged than thee does now. Would n't thee better wait a little?"

"No, I must go while this interesting pallor is still upon me. It's an 'ill wind which blows no man good.' If they see I am not long for this world, my pictures will take a sudden rise in value."

"I'm afraid thee is flippant."

"No, no. I'm in earnest," he said, laughing down at her, then, suddenly repentant, he took her hand, bent over it and kissed it like a courtier. "Forgive me," he said. "Good-bye, Miss Drew. If I return to paint or to remove my things, I shall hope to see you. Thank you both for many courtesies. They have all been appreciated and will never be forgotten." He spoke with a hurried and intense manner, and abruptly left them, ere they could utter the usual conventional phrases of parting. Suddenly he turned back. "I'm afraid I've been very abrupt. I can't express myself adequately. Set words are cold covers of real feeling. I've enjoyed your acquaintance and don't wish it to end here. You have been courageously kind to a stranger. Good-bye."

"Indeed, it must not end here."

"It has been a pleasure to us also," they cried in one breath, and this time he was gone.

The next morning Mark took Somers over to his barn studio, and instructed him how to pack his few belongings there, and taking his most valuable sketches with him, he left Woodbury Center without seeing Joyful again.

He rode over to Willoughby Junction in the democrat wagon, through the drowsy heat of midday, his trunk rattling in the wagon box behind him, and Somers at his side droning out his monologue of gossipy reminiscence. Mark felt too ill to heed him, and braced himself in his seat with his sound arm to prevent the continuous jar and rattle of the vehicle from giving him acute pain. As they crossed the wagon way through the woods, Mark felt a sudden, maddening desire to turn into the cool, green lane, instead of proceeding on his way. The impulse angered him. He laid it and the ever recurring image of Joyful before his mental vision to his present physical weakness, and inability to cope with himself.

"Yonder a leetle ways fu'ther to th' left 's where I found ye that day," said Somers, pointing with his whip. "I d'know 's I sh'd 'a found ye 't all if the mare had n't 'a taken a fit at sight o' ye, 'nd acted like Satan possessed. Beats all the sense critters has. G'lang! Well, I never thought then 't I'd ever take ye out o' this place sittin' here on th' seat beside me. Did think 't I might fetch ye over to Willoughby Junction in a box, maybe. G'lang!"

"Heavens, man! Look out over these stones a little, can't you? I might as well have been taken over in a box and done with it, as to be tortured to death now."

If there was any one of his fictions in which Somers took

more delight than another, it was that he drove a spirited horse. He took Mark's exclamation of pain as a compliment to his steed. "Whoa, Fan. Whoa! She alluz does want to go like Jehu. I clean forgot about your broken bones, 'nd was givin' her her head a leetle. Whoa!"

But with a switch of her tail and a jerk of her head to loosen the reins on her bit, the mare continued her usual ambling trot, unmindful of admonitions either for haste or moderation, and Somers continued his flow of talk. Thus was the weary distance at last covered, and Mark found himself again passing swiftly away from the place, just as he had come, his valise and sketching outfit at his feet, and the landscape rushing by him scarcely heeded, and the problems of his life still stirring in him a vague unrest.

As he neared the city and the bustle and life of the suburban stations broke upon him, the events of the past few weeks began to slip back into a chamber of his mind occupied by dreams. When he arrived, he went first to his old studio rooms. They were as he had left them — partially dismantled, wholly disordered. His paintings had been returned from the exhibit, and stood about in boxes. He paced up and down the long room, kicking aside as he walked the pieces of wrapping paper and bits of string and pasteboard that littered the floor. Well, he must be done with dreams. The old life was upon him again, he must take it up and mold circumstances to his own ends. On the whole, perhaps he would better not go back to Woodbury Center at all, but stay where he was and work. He turned some of the half-finished canvases from the wall, but it was late, the lights were dim, and he could hardly trace their outlines. Hungry he was, but weariness over-

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came his desire for food, and he stretched his length on a couch in one corner of the studio, and was soon asleep.

Then was the chamber of dreams unlocked, and Joyful came stealing out. He saw her in a dense wood, and it was raining, and she carried the white hen in her arms, and the young ducklings in her apron, and she was weeping bitterly. He tried to take her in his arms and comfort her, but she was gone, and he found he was leading Louise by the hand, and they were walking in the bed of a turbulent stream, and Louise said to him, "Why do you lead me in this water over these rough stones?" and he replied, "I am leading you to the cottage of Joyful Heatherby. The stream will take us there." Then he turned and looked at Louise, and behold she was blind, and he said, "How did you become blind?" and she said, "I am not blind. I am walking by the light within," and he said, "Then why do you stumble over these stones in the water?" and Louise cried out, "There are no stones, there are no stones," and she fell down; and when he tried to catch her in his arms and save her she seemed to slip away in the stream and was gone. And then the stream turned into a vast ocean, and the woods loomed up behind him black and forbidding, and out on the ocean he saw Mr. Heatherby's boat tossing about without sail or rudder, and Joyful stood in the boat and called him, and she wore the pink dress Elizabeth had fashioned for her, and her arms were full of blue gingham aprons. Then he thought the boat was drifting farther and farther away, and he cried out to her and tried to walk to her on the waves, but could not, and then he was taken up and tossed hither and thither in the sea. But when he thought he was lost he found himself

sitting beside Joyful under the great beech tree, and she was feeding him with scalloped tea cake and milk. And he leaned toward her to kiss her, and suddenly there was a great stamping of horses' feet, and he looked and saw that Somers was leading his mare about the studio, and trying to back the democrat wagon through the hall to get it into the elevator, and he called out to Somers in anger, "What did you bring that beast up here for?" and Somers replied that he had just given the mare her head and she had brought him there, and now he was trying to get her down again, whereupon there were more shouts and trampling, and Mark awoke to the realization that some one was pounding furiously at the door of the studio. It was the janitor who had come to inquire why the lights were turned on, for he thought Mark was in the country. Then, half famished, and with aching bones, he roused himself, and went out into the warm summer evening to seek supper and his lodging.

CHAPTER XIII

MARK RETURNS TO THE WORLD

"O Love! what art thou, Love? the ace of hearts,
Trumping earth's kings and queens, and all its suits;
A player masquerading many parts
In life's odd carnival; — a boy that shoots
From ladies' eyes, such mortal, woundy darts;
A gardener, pulling heart's-case up by the roots;
The Puck of Passion — partly false — part real —
A marriageable maiden's beau ideal."

— THOMAS HOOD.

LOUISE PARSONS' gowns fitted her perfect figure to perfection. This July day she wore a white dress, and upon her well-poised head a wide halo of creamy tulle combined with Maréchal Niel roses, underneath which her soft, light hair rolled back from her smooth brow and delicate ears. She was driving Scott Stevens' beautiful horses, and enjoying the exhilaration; while he, at her side, turned half round that he might watch and enjoy her. Behind them sat a wooden man, clad in Quaker drab, perched on a small, high seat, and apparently neither seeing nor hearing.

"You must n't speak to me when we're among all these carriages," she said. "I'm afraid I sha' n't manage well. There! I almost scraped their wheel."

"That was their coachman's fault. He had no business to allow you to come so near. Pull them down. That's right. Keep them to a steady, even pace, and let them feel

a master hand holds the reins. Bravo! I'll have you a splendid whip before the season's over."

"When we come out on the shore drive, where there are fewer carriages, it will be easier, won't it?"

"Yes, but they always want to go there. I usually speed them a little, and they expect it."

"Ah, that's what I would like. I feel like flying. Will you let me speed them?"

"Certainly."

"But you must show me how."

"I will, indeed. Keep a little more to the right, so we can fall in line."

"Oh, Mr. Stevens, I had forgotten something. Will you tell me the time? I'm expecting a friend at five."

"You're too late. It is half past that hour now." He smiled, looking down at his watch.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Take the reins and turn about quickly. I must get home immediately."

As he took the reins, he leaned forward and glanced into her eyes. "Is it a matter of such grave importance that you must be there when your friend arrives?"

"Indeed it is."

Scott Stevens smiled one of his quiet, disconcerting smiles. "How did you happen to forget it?" he asked.

With a slight lift of her chin, she turned her face from him toward the sea. "Oh, are you leaving the shore drive? Then I can't look at the bay, and it's so lovely now."

"Yes, I'm taking you home by a quieter way. You did n't answer my question."

She settled herself in quiet dignity at his side, her hands dropped in her lap, and her profile toward him. "I did n't

think an answer was required. You know quite well how I came to forget."

"Yes, that is pleasant, but I wanted to hear you say it, you know. I don't wish you to remember engagements when you are driving with me."

"Ah, but you see I did."

"But too late. I have the satisfaction of knowing that you forgot for a while. Here's a fine stretch of road, and no teams. Shall we speed them a little? Will you take the reins?"

"Thank you, no. I'm too agitated now. Are you taking me home? This is a very roundabout way, I'm sure."

"What's the difference? You're too late to meet your friend on time now, anyway," he laughed. "You have the most serene way of showing agitation I ever saw."

"It is my religion of peace that brings that serenity. I try to be always calm."

"Well, peace is a very good thing. I like it, myself, especially in a lady, don't you know. Now you take the reins, and speed them a little, and I'll show you how. Brace your feet, and keep a firm grasp on the lines, so. Now gently draw up on them, that's right, slowly and steadily. See them pick up their feet? Isn't that pretty? They skim along like birds."

And so they did, and so Scott Stevens dominated Louise, and so it was that Mark Thorn sat and visited with his Aunt Kate for an hour before his love came to him. When Louise was lifted from the vehicle, they sat on the vast verandah behind a screen of vines. Scott Stevens glanced back as he drove away, and had an instant vision of Louise drifting like a white cloud up the white-pebbled walk,

between gorgeous mosaic beds of coleuses, holding out her two hands to a gentleman in evening dress, who came down to meet her, and who took the two hands in his own, and bending, kissed her on the forehead.

"Damn," he muttered. "Thought Thorn was in France." Then he smiled, then he laughed outright, and started the team to a faster gait. "If I were Thorn — I see myself allowing my lady's cool airs to hold me off to a decorous arm's-length salute."

Mrs. Parsons rose with dignified reproach on her well-bred face. She was slight, staid, and delicate, and her fine hands had held a prayer book every Sabbath day for fifty years. Every one wondered that she could tolerate so many religious vagaries in her stepdaughter, but those who knew Louise understood it. She looked up in the tall, beautiful girl's face: "Why are you so late, dear? You won't have time to dress for dinner. It's being served now."

Louise kissed her cheek lightly. "Not dress? and the first evening Mark is with us — too bad!"

"Not at all. You are charmingly dressed — a dream in white."

"Then I must look like a ghost, Mark. Dreams in white usually are." She was deliberately divesting herself of hat and gloves, and as Mark watched her slow, graceful movements, and down-dropped lids, he felt the old satisfaction in her beautiful lines and coloring stealing over him. Her absolute perfection of physique filled him with keen delight. "What an exquisite creature!" he thought, but he only said: "Most radiant ghost, most heavenly — come, let's dine and waive the matter of dress. Any more beauty just now would make me faint. I'm hungry as a Turk."

"No wonder, Mark. You are the ghost of yourself. You look as if you had n't eaten a thing since you left us," exclaimed his aunt.

"Then come, we 'll dine," said Louise. "But to be hungry as a Turk is nothing. The Turks are all Mahomedans in religion, and abstemiousness is part of their creed, you know."

"No, I didn't know. I always thought them rather portly, sensual old duffers."

"Now, Mark," she slipped her hand through his arm, "we're not going to begin quarreling the first thing, are we?"

"No, dear, no. Suppose I just kiss you, by way of variety." He placed one finger under her chin, and turned her face up to his. She submitted calmly. "You are charmingly cool this warm evening."

"Don't be silly, Mark. Come, Mamma Kate."

Throughout dinner Louise was animated, charming, and affable, while Mark, sitting opposite her, thoughtfully studied anew her personality. He felt vaguely a change either in himself or in her. What was it? A charm lost, or a charm added—or was it a reversal of his own viewpoint? He watched the movements of her fingers as she toyed with the spoon in her ice, and the fire in the opal she wore, and the turn of her wrist, and the round of her arm; and at the same time, as if extended to him out of the realm of dreams, he saw another hand holding toward him a violet, and a voice saying: "Everything has beauty, you know. This has. A soul must be greater than just beauty, or Undine would have been enough without it."

He put up his hand as if to brush cobwebs from before

his face, and tried to concentrate his thoughts on what Louise and his aunt were saying. They were telling him all the news of his set and their own.

"You have come down just in time, Mark. Mr. Stevens is fitting up his yacht in the most charming taste, and sparing no expense. I heard them say he wished he could have your help."

"You may go now, Stokes," said Mrs. Parsons, speaking to the man behind her chair. "And tell Hart that we will want the carriage at a quarter to nine, promptly. We shall wish to be there early, sha' n't we, Louise?"

"Yes, indeed, — nine won't be a minute too soon."

"What is going on?" asked Mark.

"Mr. Stevens gives a dance at the Casino to-night, and I promised to go early, for Mamma Kate is one of the hostesses. You must go with us, Mark, for the New York crowd will be there in full force. Boston's well enough as far as family goes, but when it comes to spending money, you must get into the New York set."

"I suppose you must." Mark smiled, and crushed an almond shell between his fingers.

"You need n't look down and smile in that way. You know well enough that in order to be really practical in your art you must have to do with the spenders of money."

"Certainly, certainly. Now, Louise, come, Aunt —" he lifted his glass on high, "A toast to the spenders of money. Long may they spend."

"Then you'll go with us?"

"Shall be delighted."

"Come, Mamma Kate. You will see her in the loveliest gown in the world, Mark. It's far prettier than mine."

"A fine gown means only one thing at my age."

"What do you mean, Mamma Kate?"

"That I need it. You would better hurry, Louise."

"Oh, I have time and to spare. We can look at your sketches first, Mark. Where are they? Send for them. I always say it's most important for paintings to look well by artificial light, for they are usually seen in that way — even in galleries. What have you been doing?"

"Mostly nature studies — some ideals." He took the portfolio from Stokes' hand and began tossing on one side canvas after canvas.

"Let me see them all. Won't you?"

"You won't care for those. I'll show you the more finished pieces." He drew out a sketch of the sea, with an old boat on the sands, and set it before them, but Louise was looking at the canvases he had thrown out.

"You know I always like most the ones you like least. Now, what's this? One of your ideals? You see it's perfectly fascinating." She held up the painting he had made of Joyful as she posed for Undine in the wood. "What's it for? I mean what is the idea? No, don't put it back with those. Hold it for me, so."

He reluctantly held it in the light for her.

"Look, Mamma Kate! Mark, you certainly are improving. What is it for?"

"I don't know that it's for anything."

"You know what I mean — the idea — what is it? A mermaid? Of course not, for she would n't be dressed, if it were, but it would make a lovely panel. Mr. Stevens wants three for the saloon of his yacht. It would be just the thing for your summer's work, Mark. He said he was

going to get some really celebrated artist to do them, and I thought of you immediately."

"Call me celebrated, do you? Thanks."

"Well, you are going to be sometime, you know. That's what I wanted to see these for. Those panels were in my mind."

Mark tossed the picture one side and selected another. "How would this do — a leafy glade?"

"A leafy glade in a boat! You should have something pertaining to the sea. Have n't you anything more in there?"

"Yes, fifty things."

"Come, show them to us, Mark."

"Oh, we have n't time now," he said, resolutely replacing them in their case. He looked in a moment haggard and worn.

"If Mark is to be up half the night with us, he must rest now. You forget, Louise, that he has been hurt and ill."

"Indeed, no. One can't forget — you look wretchedly, Mark. But after all, that pallor gives you an interesting, poetic air. Does n't it, Mamma Kate? Every one will see that you are a genius now. Go and rest. I would n't miss having you with us this evening for anything. You look so distinguished that you are quite adorable. I'll go now. Do be ready in time."

Mark laughed, and thoughtlessly seized the great portfolio with the wrong hand and swung it around, giving his lame shoulder a wrench. He compressed his lips with the pain. Louise was gone, but his aunt saw the movement and the look, and called Stokes.

"Wait a moment, Mark," she begged, as he started to follow the man to his room. "Tell me, dear, I did n't ask

because I know you hate a fuss, but — why could n't you have told me?" She laid her hand on his arm, and looked sadly up in his face.

The look reminded him of his mother, and he stooped and kissed her. "You must n't be so solicitous about me, dear little auntie. Don't you know I've traveled half the world over and taken pretty good care of myself? This was an ugly fall, but I'm well mended, only a little sore still."

"But I might have come to you and taken care of you, if you had only let me know."

"I had excellent care, aunt, with the kindest and dearest old people, who could n't have been better to me if I were their own son."

"Well, you'll rest now. Don't mind if you do keep us waiting. It won't matter in the least."

But Mark did not rest. He sat in his room with the picture of Undine before him, thinking. He wondered why he had brought it with him, and yet he knew. It was that he might study it in just this way alone; but he had not meant to show it to them — at least not yet — perhaps sometime, when he had carried out his idea, and it was placed on exhibit, — or —. He tossed his head back and laughed, then began pacing his room.

"Scott Stevens' yacht," he said, and then he laughed again. "I'll make something for that boat, though, if I get the chance, to please Louise, but it shall not be this." He carefully replaced it and locked the portfolio, and again paced his room. Presently he went down, and waited thirty minutes looking over papers and magazines, before the ladies appeared. He thought he had never seen Louise so beautiful, and admired her frankly.

"I might make a portrait of you for the yacht. I could make a deep sea-green background, and the yellow sheen of this satin would be like yellow moonlight. Oh, I have it, I'll paint you as the spirit of Fingal's Cave."

She laughed, and took his arm. "Come, Mark, don't be silly. We're going to be awfully late, Mamma Kate, but then we have a good excuse — Mark's visit, you know, and this being the first evening — so much to talk over."

"I've been down here ready for half an hour or more."

"You ungenerous man, to speak of it! Don't you dare say a word when I make our excuses to Mr. Stevens; and, Mark, if you don't feel like dancing, you need n't. I'll sit out your dances with you."

"Will you? What if I prefer to dance them out?"

That evening Louise had her way. She thought Mark had never been so interesting — so gay and debonair. She easily secured Scott Stevens' promise to call next day and look over Mark's works with a view to selecting subjects for the panels, and he had proposed that they should spend the afternoon on board the yacht.

"You know, Mark, we can't begin too soon, for he is to sail in three weeks, if the yacht is ready, and you will need all that time and more," she said, as they drove away that night.

"We must begin immediately, must we?" He emphasized the "We."

"Of course, Mark." She leaned back wearily in her corner of the carriage, and lightly played with her fingers on her knee the notes of a waltz. It was the last waltz, and she had danced it with Scott Stevens.

Mark took the hand in his and kissed the fingers before he returned it. "Very well, then, we'll begin to-morrow."

"And I want particularly that he should see the study I admired so much this evening."

"Ah, but I can't show him that one."

"Now, Mark. Are you going to be disagreeable?"

"No, Louise. Are you?"

"But why not let him see that one?"

"Because I have other plans for it."

"Mark, don't you know that — every one knows that Mr. Stevens can have the very finest artist in Europe paint these panels? He has said he would. He could have Puvis de Chavannes, if he chose. If he has you to do these it will be because I ask him."

"How do you know he could have the finest artist in Europe?"

"Because money can buy everything."

"Everything except that sketch," said Mark, with a smile.

"Why are you so fussy about that particular one?"

"Why do you wish him to see it?"

"Because it may make all the difference. He might give you the commission just because of a fancy for that one. He might not care for another thing you have."

"So? I thought he was to give it to me because you asked it."

"Mark, you are perfectly dreadful to-night."

He took her hand again, but she drew it away. "No. You're not to kiss my hand again until you explain yourself."

"Very well." He ceased his bantering manner and

straightened himself. "If I accept a commission from Scott Stevens to paint the panels in his yacht, I will consider the matter and paint what I think best. On the whole, I think I won't show him my sketches at all."

"How proud you are. But he will have to see what kind of work you are doing."

"He knows well enough. He has been to the exhibits."

"That's just the trouble. Your work attracted so little attention there."

"And he has spent hours in my studio in Paris watching me paint. He knows as well now as it is in him to know. He would know no better if he lived a hundred years — not if he belonged to the fraternity of artists, and he used to think he did. No — I won't show him the sketches."

"Mark! and I have asked him to see them. You're not going to allow your pride to stand in the way of such an opportunity?"

"No. My pride shall further the opportunity."

The carriage stopped and Mark alighted and handed the ladies out, and then took his aunt's arm. "You are tired, Aunt."

"Yes, Mark. And don't try to argue that matter out to-night. Go to bed, both of you, and settle it to-morrow."

"Very well, Mamma Kate. Good night, Mark," said Louise sweetly, and they parted. But they were saved all the trouble of adjusting their differing opinions next day by Scott Stevens himself. A note from him at breakfast invited them to drive out in his drag to a distant golf links with a party, to lunch at the club there, and then return by way of the dock, and spend the afternoon on board the yacht.

"This falls in with my wishes perfectly, since you won't show him your sketches. Shall I accept for you, Mark?"

"Certainly."

"And you, Mamma Kate? He says there will be Charlie Van Burgh, and Mrs. Renolds, and May Carlie — she is an English girl with whom he is desperately in love, and Mrs. Renolds is fabulously rich and very dashing. He's trying to make up his mind between the two —"

"Who is?"

"Charlie Van Burgh. He has been carrying on a double flirtation all the season. We'll see who has the upper hand now, by the one he chooses to sit beside during the drive — he'll give you the other one."

"Will he?" said Mark, with a laugh. "And who sits with you?"

"Make my excuses, Louise. I sha'n't be needed, if Mrs. Renolds is of the party, and you may say I have a headache." Mrs. Parsons looked weary, and betook herself to the hammock on the verandah with a novel, while Louise disappeared to write and dispatch her note.

But evidently Mark was to have no option as to where he should sit, or with whom. When Scott Stevens drove up, the seating had all been arranged. May Carlie and Van Burgh occupied the last seat, just in front of the two liveried gentlemen balancing themselves on their respective perches at the rear — Mrs. Renolds in the middle, alone, and Scott Stevens, with an empty seat beside him, handling the reins and skillfully managing two pairs of beautifully matched horses.

Mrs. Renolds and Mark had met three years before in Paris — her husband was living then — Van Burgh was an

acquaintance, and May Carlie was a stranger. She was pretty, fair, and slender, with a complexion of pink and white English roses. Mark was presented to her, then he assisted Louise to her place beside Stevens, and climbed to his own seat with the gracious and smiling widow.

He had felt the keen, practiced measurement she was making of him while he stood bare-headed beside the drag during the moment of his introduction to Miss Carlie. Now as he settled himself beside her, she turned and looked at him again with a veiled glance of curiosity that rested but an instant on his face, then shot past him to a recognition of a passing acquaintance.

"I am glad you have n't forgotten me, Mr. Thorn."

"That would be impossible, Mrs. Renolds."

"You were such an earnest student in those days. You never took time to make a real acquaintance, did you?"

"Acquaintances, yes — many. Friends, very few."

"I thought as much. And do you work as hard now, or do you live a little?"

"I do both, by fits and starts. Just now I am thinking of living a little while, if that's what you mean by idling about here."

"Ah, yes. I suppose it's living. Then this is a good time to renew our acquaintance, I take it. In those days I only knew you through my husband. He had a great opinion of you."

"Thank you." They sat then for an instant of constrained silence, while the couple in front of them talked easily on, and the couple behind them kept up a running fire of repartee, or what served them as well, and laughter.

Scott Stevens held to the program he had outlined

to Louise in his note. They bowled along now by the sea, now past beautiful residences and well-kept grounds, now through bits of woods, and meadows so fair and fields so well tilled, that the landscape seemed one vast park, over smooth roads; and Mark thought of his painful ride, jolting over stones, from the Somers' boarding house to Wiloughby Junction, which now seemed far away and impossible. He looked at the poised, graceful figure in front of him beside Scott Stevens, with the old sensation which always went through him when taking cognizance of her exquisite femininity, and wondered again why he should always turn from thoughts of her to thoughts of Joyful — why he should forever be contrasting the two?

In the afternoon the party took possession of the yacht, roaming about as they chose.

"Who's doing this for you?" asked Mark, as Scott Stevens was showing him the saloon, walking with his arm thrown over Mark's shoulder. "Where did you get your color scheme? Gold and blue and green. It's very good."

"The scheme's my own."

"But it's tremendously artistic."

"Why the but? After three or four years' companionship with a lot of fellows like you, why shouldn't it be? I must have been an idiot not to imbibe a few ideas."

"And a fine setting for the panels, if the right subjects are chosen."

"Well, what would you propose?" asked Scott.

"A leafy glade for one," said Louise, demurely.

Mark smiled. "I have better ideas than that." He returned her glance.

"Well," said Scott, "make a suggestion now."

"I'll do it. In the first place, since the color scheme has not been created for the panels, they must be created for it."

"Is that intended for a sarcasm?" asked Scott.

"Not at all. Merely stating a fact."

"Very well — go ahead with your ideas."

Mark laughed, and turned away with another glance at Louise.

"Go on, go on," cried Scott.

"On one condition. That you understand I'm not making a bid."

"Ha, ha, ha. I'll understand anything you like."

Miss Carlie and Mrs. Renolds joined them at this point, and Mr. Van Burgh followed in their wake. "Paint the ladies," cried he. "Put one in each panel. There's Miss Carlie in front of one now. Perfect!" He stepped backward and looked at her through his hand.

"Capital idea — eclipses mine. Mrs. Renolds, we'll paint you as the spirit of Fingal's Cave — the type of Celtic beauty; and Miss Carlie —"

"Mr. Thorn! Did n't you propose to paint me in a deep sea-green Fingal's Cave motive? How base, to slight me now," murmured Louise.

"Ah, but I forgot for the moment the peculiar style of your beauty. I can make a Saxon, or a Grecian of you, but a Celt, never. If you —"

"And what about me, were you going to say, Mr. Thorn?" asked Miss Carlie.

"The Loreley — sitting on a rock — as the poem has it — combing her wonderful hair in the evening glow, and luring poor boatmen to their death with her singing."

"How gruesome I'll be!"

"Ah, but very beautiful!"

"And Miss Parsons?" asked Scott Stevens.

"Shall be the fair Melusina."

"Done," cried Stevens. "You have the order. Ladies, you hear?"

"I'm ready," exclaimed Mrs. Renolds, laughing merrily.

"For what?" cried May Carlie. "Would you dare?"

"For what? Why, to be immortalized — and dare? I'd dare anything."

"Miss Parsons, will you take the dare?" asked Scott.

"I can't say I like the part Mr. Thorn has assigned me, but if it's a dare, yes."

"Bravo!" cried Van Burgh.

"Louise, will Aunt Kate allow me the use of that upper north room for a few weeks, do you think?"

Louise laughed. "Is there anything she would not allow you, Mark?"

"Mrs. Renolds, will you give me your help for a week?"

"Gladly. What shall I wear?"

"Ah, what, indeed?"

"You said yellow satin last evening, for that character, Mark."

He looked critically a moment at Mrs. Renolds, then turned toward Louise. "What I said last evening doesn't count. It isn't much matter what you wear, so that the neck and arms are not covered. I'll use drapery and a girdle, at any rate. It must be semi-barbaric, you know." He went to a workman who was fitting in a buffet and borrowed a two-foot rule, and began measuring the panel space with it.

"How long will it take you?" asked Scott Stevens.

"I can't say. You leave soon. How long will you be gone?"

"I didn't purpose returning until September."

"Very well, I'll have them ready on your return, but I must tax you ladies during the next three weeks pretty heavily, to get the studies made."

"Capital! I shall spend a while cruising about in the Mediterranean next spring, early, you know, and I'll have some distinguished guests. This saloon will be a unique thing." He looked about him with pride. "Yes, if they have anything better to show me over there, why — they may show it."

"I've been on board several of our English yachts, and they are not nearly so nice, Mr. Stevens," said Miss Carlie.

"Thanks tremendously. And now that I am to have the help of you ladies, Thorn will eclipse anything ever ventured on before."

Then they strolled to other parts of the craft, and Scott Stevens took Louise to the side, and looked over at the workmen who were busy down below.

"What are they doing?" asked she.

"Painting out the old name. She's to be re-christened, and sail hereafter under a name that will be a mascot for her safety."

"What name is that?"

He smiled, and said in a low tone, "Louise."

CHAPTER XIV

A TOUCH OF WORLDLY WISDOM

Ah, Lady wise, tell me what lies
Beneath the softness of those eyes.
That veiled, swift glance — but half askance,
Is it a tribute or a lance?
Thought half revealed — hope half concealed,
Lies there a lucent spring unsealed?
In those dark deeps, what vision sleeps?
Hide they a heart that laughs, or weeps?

THREE weeks had passed. Mrs. Parsons and Louise were gone with the Scott Stevens party for their month's cruise, and Mark walked alone by the sea. Not that he needed to be alone; he might have had the companionship of Mrs. Renolds had he asked it. That lady not being one of the party, and Van Burgh having finally made his choice — as it was generally believed — and taken the English girl, she also was alone.

Mark had just passed her where she sat apart, a book in her lap, her head resting on her hand, and her gaze fixed on the distant horizon. He might have asked her to stroll on with him, but he merely lifted his hat. Had Van Burgh really given her up, or had she dropped Van Burgh, was the question in Mark's mind, as he walked on.

During the past three weeks he had seen almost as much of her as of Louise. The two had been much together, and when her own sittings were done she had still accom-

panied May Carlie and Louise, while he was painting from them. She told Mark it was a privilege to bring back the old times when she used to visit his studio in Paris. Now as her eyes followed his retreating figure, she lifted her shoulders with a slight shrug. "Of course he's genuinely in love with Louise — but she —" Mrs. Renolds rose, and sauntered slowly along, keeping her finger in her book at the place where she had been reading. "What a fool! I'll wager she does n't see a penny's value of difference between him and Scott Stevens. I've a mind to give her a lesson in values."

She went on down the beach and sat with her back to the direction Mark had taken, and resumed her reading. When he returned she looked up and smiled, and moved a scarcely perceptible inch farther to the end of the seat. He dropped into the place at her side, and taking up her book began mechanically turning the leaves.

"Why are you roaming up and down the beach here?" she asked, still smiling. "Do you feel it incumbent on you to eschew all companionship while Miss Parsons is absent? I'm sure she does n't demand such asceticism."

"She? Oh, no," he laughed.

They sat silent then, while Mark stared at the book, turning the pages one by one.

"Let me take it," said Mrs. Renolds at last, and he gave it to her. She closed it and folded her hands over it in her lap. "Now," she said roguishly, "tell me what it's about."

"What about? Why — it's a treatise on — how the moon came to be made of green cheese."

"I knew you were mooning and not seeing it. I've gone back to the study of the classics."

He held out his hand for the book again, and she returned it. "Ah, 'Rosalind.'"

"Yes, I'm studying the part. We're to give it in the Van Burgh grounds. I think it will be a unique thing. Not only the actors, but all the guests, are to be in costume. I was asked to see you to-day — they wish you to take the part of —"

"Touchstone?"

"Of Jacques. There's no one who could do it so well. You would have to age yourself and make up a good deal, but that could be easily done."

"Thanks. You have asked me most cleverly."

"Then you will do it?"

"Impossible! You see, I don't quite belong to your leisure set. I return to Boston to-morrow."

"Indeed? Has Newport no attractions since Louise Parsons left?"

"It isn't that." Mark was one who had no currency for blandishments. He appeared positively obtuse. "I'm going to spend the rest of my summer in my studio." Suddenly he turned and looked at her. It was the gaze of an artist. She had seen her brother regard a horse he was appraising with the same expression. "Do you know, I believe I'm going to make a fine thing out of that panel of yours."

"Don't call it mine; and promise me you will disguise the likeness. It is too apparent."

"That isn't necessary. It will be quite as ideal if I do not."

"Oh, you artists are incorrigible."

"What now?"

"That's not the reason I wish it disguised."

"Why else?"

She laughed good humoredly. "But I'm vexed," she said.

"At what are you vexed? Surely—"

"Because you refuse to take the part."

"Oh, but you see, I must."

"No, I don't see."

"I've given my promise to do certain paintings before September, and — there's a more sordid necessity than the keeping of the promise."

"Artists should never be under any sordid necessity."

Mark smiled. "Poor devils," he said, "they always are."

"Ah, if I could have my way they would n't be."

"Then there would never be any art."

"Why not? Everything would be spontaneous. They would work because the spirit moved them, and not under the lash of necessity."

"Because they would be a set of miserable ingrates. Don't you know that artists are born idlers? If it were not for the lash of sordid necessity I would be playing Jacques in the Van Burgh grounds, instead of painting panels for the Stevens yacht." He rose and placed the book again in her hands. "I must go now," he said. He saw Van Burgh strolling toward them. "You will have better company — and let me thank you again for helping me as you did. We'll have a good thing of it if I can only do my part." He departed, leaving his place to Van Burgh.

"That was very kind," exclaimed the latter. "Very considerate of him. You see, I've come back again, Mrs. Renolds."

"I see," she looked at the ocean.

"You were n't expecting me."

"Not exactly, no." She was wondering if, after all, Mark

knew just what he was about. Van Burgh wiped his brow, and placed his hat at his feet.

"It's deucedly warm," he said.

"You must have been exercising," she looked provokingly cool.

"Yes, I've been hunting you up."

As for Mark, he did not wait for the next day, he departed that same evening for the city. There he toiled in his studio through the heat of August, and the measure of his success became the amount he was to receive for his labor. He took time for recreation rarely, and when he did so, he went about alone. He never had worked more incessantly nor with more definite purpose; moreover, he worked well; yet he was not satisfied with himself.

Before the month was over, he decided to leave Boston, and open a studio in New York where, after Louise returned, the social demands on his time would be less. To this end he spent the first week of September in the latter city, hunting up a suitable location. Most of his friends were out of town, but he did not care. The fever of work was on him, and his aim was more to avoid interruption, than to seek diversion.

One evening, after a hot and fatiguing day, as he was strolling toward the park, where it was his intention to have a quiet smoke, a carriage drew up to the curb some paces in front of him, and he became aware of the intent and smiling regard of its one occupant.

"Mr. Thorn! I thought I could not be mistaken. I saw you as I passed on the side street, and turned back. What a pity you wouldn't play the melancholy Jacques for me! You take the part so perfectly in life."

"Mrs. Renolds! I didn't know you were in town. Why aren't you still playing the beautiful Rosalind at Newport? That fascinating resort! What charm has drawn you away?"

"The interesting people left."

He took the vacant place at her side in obedience to her glance. "Apropos of the play, weren't you mistaken? I was just now playing Hamlet, not Jacques. My mood was not engendered by sylvan solitude. I had my share of that earlier in the season."

"Ah, yes. Louise told me you ran away and had an accident in some unfortunate maneuver, and were nearly killed."

"Not so bad as that. A broken bone or two, merely, so long ago that the event is forgotten."

"Does every event fade out of your life so quickly? Then your stay in Paris must be quite gone."

Mark laughed. "Not entirely, not entirely, Mrs. Renolds."

"You remember the Capucine friar at the artists' fête, once upon a time?"

"I remember the Cinderella who danced with the friar, and cut the traditional prince."

"I know you were going to the park for a solitary smoke. Don't let me spoil the hour for you. You see I'm taking you there. Won't you smoke now?"

"Thanks, my desire for the solitary is gone. I prefer conversation and companionship. Tell me what goes on at Newport."

"Nothing, now. I simply fled from ennui. The same people, the same events—. My house here is being ren-

ovated, and I came to look after it. What did you come for? Are the panels done?"

"Done? No. Nothing is ever done. They may be put up, however. I shall work no more on them."

"Louise told me yesterday —"

"What! Are they returned? Beg pardon — what did she tell you?" Mark looked straight before him. His companion watched him without turning her head.

"Am I really giving you news then?" she asked, with a slight lift of her brows. They had entered the park, and she gathered the reins firmly and allowed her beautiful horse a more rapid gait. Her manner implied much more than her words, and Mark felt a momentary pique that he had betrayed his ignorance.

"I expected them a week ago, but as they did n't put in an appearance I thought to spend the interval as best I could. I'm moving my studio to New York." He took out a cigar and lighted it, turning his face away from her. "You see I accept your permission — thanks. What did Louise tell you?"

"She said — but I really think she did n't know you were to leave Boston —"

"No, it was a sudden decision."

"Why do you? Is this a better art center?"

"I hardly know. Either is very good for this country; the only real art center, from my standpoint, is Paris. But to return —"

"Ah, yes. The yacht came in three days ago. She said she had no idea where you were — and that she went with your aunt to your studio, and saw the panels. So you see, when I spied you, I thought I had made a great find."

"You did, indeed. I'm glad myself to know where I am. Did she say how she liked them?"

"No, but she must have liked them. You never do poor work."

"I'm not so sure."

"I am. Do you think I would have sat for that panel if I were not? Now I've only one change I wish made. It's too nearly a portrait, not enough of a type."

"But it is quite as ideal, as it is. I told you so."

"I remember, and I told you artists were incorrigible."

"How so?"

"The individual is nothing to an artist—his art is all he thinks of. Did you think I sat for you in order to grace Scott Stevens' yacht?"

He turned about and looked squarely at her, and noticed that she appeared younger than she had three years ago in Paris. She was the wife of a year then; now she had been a widow two years. She was beginning to lighten her mourning a little, and wore a most charming costume of gray without any relief or accent save that given by her abundant dark hair and her eyes. The thought flashed upon him that, although he had painted from her—and she had posed faithfully that week at Newport—he had not considered her personality, nor fully realized her charm. He did not speak for a moment.

"Yes," she continued, smiling. "You did n't look at me, you know. You saw my arms and my shoulders, the poise of my head, my complexion and my hair, but you did n't see me. Confess now, did you?" She looked suddenly and frankly in his eyes for the first time during their conversation, and he felt his senses reel. His mind was carried

back three years, and for a moment he seemed to be whirling about in a rapid waltz, with her in his arms. He put up his hand as if to brush something from before his eyes, and laughed.

"Is n't it enough that I see you now? I confess nothing. You must confess to me. Why did you sit?"

She turned away with a smile. "Ah, you have confessed very completely, Mr. Thorn. You did n't see me, you saw Louise, and what you were to receive."

"Why did you sit?" he asked savagely.

"I sat for you, Mr. Thorn. You needed a fresh model, and I wished to see your success."

"You sat for me at Van Burgh's suggestion. How was I to know you cared to have me see in you anything more than a model?"

"You are quite right," she said sweetly. Then after a pause, during which he had time to see what a brute he had been, she resumed, "I was only making a plea that you should destroy the likeness. I wish no one to see more in the picture than you saw."

"I will destroy the whole thing, if you wish," he said grimly.

"But that is not what I wish. It is beautiful. If you will pardon me I will tell the truth—which is quite unconventional—it is the most beautiful panel of the three."

"I grant it. Then why not leave it as it is? Why did you sit at all? What do you really wish?"

"Since I'm in the business of telling the truth, I'll answer your questions. I sat because I wanted you to have the order—not for the money there might be in it, although that ought to be considerable—but because—"

"Thank you. Continue, please."

"Because of the notice you would get. It is absurd, but the truth—in this country you will gain more popularity from those paintings, among those who will see them, than you would from the finest effort in an exhibition. I knew, moreover, that if I posed for you it would secure you the order. Scott Stevens really knows no more about art than an elephant, although he likes to pose as an art connoisseur. What he really wanted was something unique—even bizarre. That three beautiful women—pardon me—who have an undeniable position in Paris, New York, or London posed for them would be all he could ask. I also knew that neither of the others would pose for you if I refused. Now you understand why I ask to have the hint of likeness destroyed. I was willing—nay glad—to serve you, even at Van Burgh's suggestion, but I am not willing to serve Scott Stevens."

"I have been very obtuse. It shall certainly be done. I would demolish the whole thing gladly, rather than that you should have a moment's annoyance."

"Would you defeat my purpose? No,—change the personality."

"Yes, yes." He was regarding her intently.

"Do you see me now?" she asked, with a merry twinkle.

"You are very hard on me. How shall I please you? I will do whatever you wish."

"Then cease looking at me as if I were a model being appraised for a picture, and regard me as a friend. Here I have brought you back to the place where I found you, and do you really think you know where you are?" she laughed lightly.

"No. I know less where I am than ever before; but — I have learned my lesson. If ever you catch me again looking at you as if you were a model, put my eyes out." They were silent after that, and she pulled the horse down to a walk. Presently Mark spoke again. "You say Stevens has no art in him. He designed that saloon, did he not? It is most artistic."

"Believe me — a woman gave him his ideas."

Mark's face lighted. "Was it you? He told me the scheme was his own."

She smiled again. "It was not mine. And now, father confessor, I am in the confessional no longer. I shall not tell you what woman gave him the ideas, but they are not his."

"This was most kind of you," said Mark, as he alighted from the carriage.

"The pleasure was mine. When do you return?"

"To-morrow."

A shade passed quickly over her face. "Then I sha' n't see you again. Too bad, since I shall remain here. Good-bye."

"But I'm to be located in New York hereafter, you know."

"Ah, yes. I am pleased." She drove rapidly away, and Mark stood for a moment looking after the gracefully rounded figure in the smart little trap.

CHAPTER XV

PREMONITIONS FULFILLED

The years? Nay count them not, for they are not.
Thy life? A part, a point, a flash made visible,
Of that vast whole men call eternity.
Thy soul? Yea, that thou art, apart from fears of life or death.
Thy soul, and God — take cognizance of these,
And of thy neighbor's soul. These are the whole.
These dwell in one eternal verity
Of youth, of spring, and fruitage — all
Encircled in the vast eternal Love,
Glad, palpitating in refulgent light.
Live out thy span, yet know thyself a part of this.
Drink to the dregs thy bitter cup or glad;
Yea live, and love and sing; yea, laugh and weep;
And let thy body be down swallowed in the vast
Of ocean's deep, or be held clod bound in the grave;
All these must pass. Thy soul, thy neighbor's soul, and God endure,
Are verities, and part of God's eternal Now of joy.

THE last weeks of summer slipped quietly and swiftly away, and early frosts opened the chestnut burrs, and cast a mantle of glory upon the earth. The harvest moon hung like a burning globe over the sea, and the long mysterious path of light that Joyful so loved stretched over its wrinkled surface from the horizon's edge to the shore line at her feet. She could stand now in the still, sweet evenings and dream her dreams, for Jack was very far away and would not disturb her. He seemed to have gone out of her life. She

had shed him as she had shed her short frocks, and if he had returned she would no longer have feared him.

Sometimes she wondered that he never wrote her, but then dismissed the wonder with the thought that he was still angry with her. Moreover, in the past she had not been in the habit of receiving letters, for she knew no one with whom to correspond, unless when Elizabeth was away, and then the letters were few, and she had not fallen in the way of looking for them. Now and again her grandfather heard from Nathanael, in business letters concerning matters in which she had no interest. She only learned, vaguely, from them, that he was somewhere in the vast West, working in some great and large way such as was never heard of in their little village, and doing wonderful things.

Elizabeth, too, heard from Nathanael, but in his letters he never mentioned Joyful. She marveled at this, and in her heart she treasured a slight feeling of resentment toward him for it. Did he imagine her in love with him, that he took such pains to conceal from her this passion for the child? What had she to do with his affairs other than to take in them the kindly interest of a friend? She wondered if he wrote to Joyful, but scorned to question her; and Joyful, whose heart was quite at peace concerning him, never mentioned his name. Then Elizabeth was troubled and grew solicitous for Nathanael, that he should be loved by the one he had chosen, as he deserved to be.

Sometimes she tested Joyful by mentioning his name, or speaking of his success or loneliness off there at his new work, when she watched the girl's face for some sign from her heart, but was ever disappointed. She would only say she was glad or sorry, as the case might be, with never a

flush, nor a quiver of an eyelid to betray a deeper feeling underneath. She was gay and full of merry, girlish chatter, learning to fashion her own dresses. She walked over to show Elizabeth, with delight, the stuff her grandfather had bought her for a new dress — a strong material, thick and warm, for the fall was upon them. She was happy over some quaint old stitches of embroidery her grandmother had taught her, and brought her work to Elizabeth, who gazed at it not seeing, only thinking sadly, "The child doesn't understand — she is too young and unformed — she can't appreciate him nor love him as he deserves."

Then Elizabeth took more pains to teach Joyful. She made her practise her music, and sing until she warbled like a bird, and Mrs. Drew would praise her.

"Thee sings beautifully, Joyful. One of these days thee will be married and become the mistress of a home, and then thee will be glad of this accomplishment. Thee will fill thy house with song and teach thy children." Then she added, turning to her daughter, "I never could honestly hold to the tenet of the Friends as to the sinfulness of music. I longed, when I was young, for such instruction as thee is giving Joyful."

"Why, Mrs. Drew! Did they think it a sin to sing?" asked Joyful, who sat with her guitar on her lap, lightly picking the strings.

"They hold it to be a snare of the world."

"I'm glad thee did n't hold it, too, mother. What would I have been without my music?" said Elizabeth.

"I think I have this now. Sing with me, 'Ladye Faire.' Sing and see if I have the time." So they sang together Schubert's beautiful song, "The Wanderer."

"Your time is all right. Now try if you can play it without your notes." Elizabeth had simplified the accompaniment for the guitar.

"You know," said Joyful, tossing back a ringlet that fell across her cheek, "I always think of three people when I play this."

"Of whom does thee think, dear?" asked Mrs. Drew.

"I think of Jack Stoddard first. You know he went away first." She could think of him now without flushing and paling, yet she seldom mentioned his name. "And then I think of Nathanael and Mr. Thorn. Only Nathanael could hardly be called a wanderer, now that he is staying in one place and working so hard, — and — I don't know whether you could call Mr. Thorn a wanderer either, for he loves a beautiful lady, and he's probably working hard, too, in his studio."

Elizabeth laughed. "How do you know that of Mr. Thorn?" she asked.

"Because he made a drawing of her once, in his notebook, and when I asked him if he was in love with her, he would n't tell me, but I know. Either he was in love with her and did n't want to be, but could n't help himself, or else he could help himself, and did n't wish to; but he's a lover, all right. You know men have to be lovers so they can have something to be good and true about, and Mr. Thorn said that in order to be a true knight, like the knights of old, a man had to do some good great thing for the lady he loved, and achieve something. I think that is what he is trying to do now."

"Then you don't think he is a wanderer?"

"I don't know. A lover and a knight might be a wanderer—he might have to be to achieve something. Jack

would like to be a lover, but he would n't care anything about the other. He never cared about knights, anyway."

The two women exchanged glances. "Why does the song make thee think of Nathanael?" asked Mrs. Drew. Elizabeth turned to the piano, and began softly to improvise.

"Oh, he started away off alone like the Wanderer—I think he would choose to be a true knight first, before even trying to be a lover, though. He would be very valiant, you know, and would do his fighting first. Most likely he's wearing his lady's token on his sleeve now, only under his coat, of course—he would not let any one see it, till he had won." Then she laughed out merrily, and they all three laughed with the contagion of her mood. But after she was gone, Elizabeth thought of the confidence with which Joyful had spoken of Nathanael, and concluded she had done her an injustice. "She may be able to appreciate him, after all," she thought.

As the summer waned, Mrs. Drew had failed perceptibly in health, and Elizabeth had been filled with anxiety. Now, with the early frosts, she had begun to hasten her preparations for departure.

"You would better take your mother and follow the bluebirds," said Dr. Welch. "Don't linger here until the snow flies."

"The bluebirds were gone weeks ago," said Elizabeth, looking up at the eaves, where the nest lay, ragged and empty.

"Yes, and so ought you to be. You may keep your mother many a year yet, if you'll do as I tell you. Take her to Spain or southern France. Anywhere away from the frosts and winds of these coasts."

"Mother dreads the voyage."

"Southern California will do — anywhere out of the cold ; but I would advise an immediate move. Keep her where there are interesting people."

For this reason they left their village home suddenly, and without the usual delays of careful housewifery. Grandmother had always prepared their last meal at the cottage, and Joyful bade them good-bye, as she had done every fall of her life, at her grandfather's gate. When the piano had been closed, and the last piece of furniture covered — when the house had been swept and the windows and doors all shut and locked — when the last trunk had been marked and packed in Somers' wagon, then would they drive over to Heatherby's cove and dine, before taking the long ride to the train.

Although different in station, a loving and courteous regard had always obtained between the two families, simple and self-respecting ; and grandmother Heatherby always had some little gift with which to speed her departing friend. This time it was a bottle of her own blackberry wine, carefully packed away under the carriage seat.

A soft Indian summer haze lay over the earth and sea, and the small bay smiled peacefully in the sun. It was one of those sweet, sleepy days of autumn, when the world seems to be dreaming and waiting. Joyful stood watching the carriage until it disappeared from sight, and the last flutter of Elizabeth's handkerchief had given the silent farewell, then she turned and walked with her grandfather down to the little pier.

"What are you going to do, grandfather?" she asked. "Isn't it too still to sail?"

"'T is now, but I'm looking for th' wind to come up 'fore long."

"Grandfather, you're not going to do it, are you? Let some one else take it. Make Jasper go with you."

"Can't do that, Joy."

"Jasper could take it alone, as well as you."

"No, no, no. You 'nd grandmother just be patient, 'nd let grand-daddy do 's he thinks best." He patted the girl's cheek, as she stood looking up at him with great sorrowful eyes. "Gran'-daddy does know best, Joy. For one thing, Jasper would n't go f'r hire. He thinks trains 're more dangerous 'n boats," the old man laughed. "He would n't go as far as Boston city 'nd come back on th' train, not for money. What's more, he's no hand at a bargain. He'd make the mendin' of a rudder come to more 'n th' boat's worth. Like 's not he'd let 'em charge 's much 's a hundred dollars, for what little repairs the boat needs — why, I could do th' work myself 'f I was as spry 's I used to be. Anyhow, she'd last my life out, 'f the' wan't a thing done to her. All she needs 's a leetle overhaulin', 'nd a good coat o' paint."

Joyful looked critically at the sky. "Do you think this weather will last, grandfather?"

"Not likely. If the wind brisks up a bit by three, I'll start. It's not such a long run — sixteen hours, 'r thereabout with a good breeze, 'nd the minute I get to th' dock I'll telegraph. You pack gran'-daddy's kit 'nd set it out by the side fence at the steps, 'nd I'll fetch it 'long down. It's better not to get Marthy excited. She asked me to get her some cloth in Woodbury Center. I calculate 't I'll get it in Boston; 'nd I'll get you a new winter cloak, too, Joy, a stylish one." While the old man talked, he was busily packing away the

few things he would need for the little trip, and Joyful sadly watched him.

"Oh, grandfather, if she should have a spell—I can't bear it."

"You be a brave girl, Joy. There are things sometimes that have to be, 'nd th' only thing to do 's to keep a stiff upper lip. See, Joy—'f you were to lie to her a leetle—accordin' to my way of thinkin'—not accordin' to Marthy's, no doubt,—but accordin' to mine, 't would be no sin—not th' least."

"Why, grandfather?"

"Never you mind, Joy. Gran'-daddy's in the right. If she asks where I be, say gran'-daddy's gone to town—Boston's town—'nd tell her I said I wouldn't be back 'fore ten anyway, 'nd that's the truth, too. Then you get her to bed early, 'nd you go to bed, too, unconcerned—that's the way to be gran'-daddy's brave girl—'nd she'll sleep till morning, 'nd then 'll come the telegram. Somers'll be over to Willoughby Junction, 'nd he'll fetch it by noon. Run along up now 'nd pack th' kit. You might put in a leetle bottle of that wine 'nd one o' those pies I saw you makin' yesterday." He drew the child to him, and looked in her eyes with a humorous twinkle in his own. "I'll be your—what do you call him?—your true knight, 'nd you c'n put in the pie for a love token."

"You always are my true knight, grand-daddy—always—always, grand-daddy dear." She threw her arms around his neck, holding him down to her height, and clinging tightly. "I'm not so much afraid of anything happening to you, as I am of her—I mean about her, you know."

"You do 's I tell you 'nd you'll get over it better 'n

you think. That's my brave girl," he called after her as she slowly climbed the low bluff.

Presently he followed her, and sat a while on the porch, meditating with his pipe. His wife came out to him, and asked if he was going to dig up the tulip bulbs and reset them, and he made some jovial remark, and said the tulips would have to set where they were a spell longer. The wind had not risen, and he decided if there was no breeze within an hour he would not leave that night.

"I'm goin' over to Jasper's, Marthy," he said at last. "Have you got a loaf of bread for him?"

"I guess you 'll find one in the cupboard. You might take him a few fried cakes, too; they're in the jar. I don't see what he does act the fool for, stayin' out there all by himself. He'd better move into town, 'nd marry Susan Clara, 'nd act like folks."

The old man went in and returned with food in a basket. Then he kissed his wife with a hearty smack. As he swung down the path, he glanced toward the sea, and saw the tree-tops beginning to sway on the distant edge of the wood. "I sha n't be back till late, Marthy," he called. "Better not sit up for me."

"I wish you'd get more of that gray yarn for your socks. I guess I'd better knit Jasper a pair. He needs some doin' for 'f he does act the fool."

Joyful came in from the summer kitchen. She had carried her grandfather's kit to the stile where the path led to the pier, and now she came out and sat on the porch with her grandmother, bringing her sewing with her. She felt guilty and heavy hearted. She too looked at the line of trees near the sea, and took note of their stirring tops in the gathering

breeze; then she glanced furtively at the old lady, who sat contentedly swaying back and forth in the rocker, while she knitted diligently on a gray woolen sock.

"It seems queer to be sewing on winter dresses, and knitting wool socks, when it's so warm and sweet out of doors, does n't it?" said Joyful.

"It's always best to be forehanded. When winter does set in after these warm falls, it generally comes sudden and sharp. Better go in 'nd try on your dress before you set those hooks and eyes. I want to see how it fits."

Then Joyful tried on the dress, and her grandmother pinned it around her supple, girlish form, and smoothed and patted it down with loving touch, and turned her about and about, and made her walk off so she could see the "hang of the skirt."

"It's got to clear the ground well, if you be in long dresses," she said, eyeing her critically over the top of her glasses. "Seems to sag a leetle 't one side,—No, I guess it's all right, 'nd I must say—I think it's real becomin' to you, Joy. You do look well in it. If 't wan't that 'Praise to the face's open disgrace,' I sh'd say you look more 'n well in it. Now you take it off 'nd finish it up this afternoon. The time's passin'."

"I don't feel a bit like sewing," said Joyful, wearily. "Can't I begin the quince jelly? I feel more like working around than sitting still."

"You should n't take 'Lizbeth's going so to heart. She'll be back in spring, 'nd meantime there's plenty to do if you help grandmother good. You look 's mopin', 'nd droopin' 's a moltin' hen. It won't do to start the jelly this evenin', but you might get them over to stew, 'nd we'll let it dreem

over-night. I always like to start jell on a good clear morning. I guess I'll finish the dress myself. I feel like sittin' still, after bein' on my feet all forenoon."

So Joyful went out and rebuilt the fire, and pared the quinces and apples, and set the parings to stew. She preferred working thus, where her grandmother could not take note of her anxious face; while the old lady sat in the inner room, and put the finishing touches to the warm, dark dress.

"Girls always do hate finishing things, but 't won't be three weeks before she'll be glad enough it's done and ready," she said to herself, as she worked. Sometimes they chatted together, calling to each other from the different rooms.

"What were you saying about Jasper, grandmother? He'd better marry Susan who?"

"Susan Clara Tufts. You know that old maid 't lives in the little house 'nd garden beyond the Stoddards' place?"

"Why should he marry her?"

"Oh, it's an old story—must 'a been ten years ago. Come to think, you would n't remember anything about it."

"But tell me. Tell about it, grandmother."

"It's just a specimen of people's foolishness 'nd pride. Jasper was a good smart man. He was an excellent good man. Must have been twenty years ago he began sailing with your grandfather. I know it wan't long after that he got engaged to Susan Clara. She was good lookin' 'nd smart, too; but she was proud. She was n't willing he sh'd fish with your grandfather for a livin'. No, he must sell his place there on the point, 'nd come in town 'nd keep a store, 'nd they both live in the old place with her mother, where she lives now."

"Well, why did n't he, if he cared for her?"

"Her mother was one of the queer sort. Some people seem to live on and on, and never do a thing on earth but keep their own folks in hot water, 'nd set the whole town by the ears, 'nd she was one of that kind. I could n't blame Jasper for not bein' willin' to have her forever settin' guard in his home betwixt him and his wife. So the weddin' was put off from year to year, and the old woman, she lived on, and Jasper kept on callin'. Once in the middle of each week, and every Sunday, 's regular as the week came round, when he was n't sailin', he called, for ten years. All that time Susan Clara was growing older, 'nd losing a trifle of her good looks, 'nd her mother was growing peskier, and Jasper, he was gettin' a leetle sour. I saw it growin' on him. He 'd say cuttin' sort of things about women in general, 'nd go around with a kind of a cross-cut-saw look on his face 't wan't good to see.

"Well, then, old Mrs. Tufts died 'nd was laid away where she could n't do any more harm, 'nd I said then to Jasper, 'You go now, 'nd marry her up quick 's you can before anything else comes up.' I think he did try to set the day—but I don't know how it was—whether he said some bitter, cuttin' thing, 's he could, or whether 't was about where they sh'd live, or about money, or what—it seems they quarreled hard. Susan Clara told him he need n't call again till she asked him to, 'nd he said it would be a good long time before he gave her the chance to ask him, 'nd he went out there on the point, 'nd there he sets to this day, like a bump on a log. He would n't take that walk in to Woodbury Center to save the dying. He thinks he's a woman hater 'nd a hermit. If he wants for anything he takes his rowboat 'nd goes to one of the 'longshore villages."

"I should n't think it would be very pleasant to live that way—feeling angry all the time. Why don't they make up?"

"It's all pride 'nd foolishness. They're growing old with no comfort in life. Self-respect's one thing—every man ought to have enough of that to hold his head up—but pride is a luxury 't won't do to indulge in too much. It's like red pepper in cookin', pride is. You don't want mor'n a dash of it, enough to give a tang; but for a regular ingredient in daily life, there's nothing like the salt of straight, good common sense. You better make the tea now, Joy, 'nd set out one of those pies. I feel's if I'd like a piece for supper."

Joyful stood in the pantry, her heart beating rapidly. She had put the pies in her grandfather's kit. "There are n't any pies here," she said at last, swallowing hard.

"Well, I declare! If that is n't just like father! Look in the jar 'nd see if he's taken the fried cakes."

"Yes—they're gone, too."

The old lady laughed good humoredly. "No wonder Jasper sticks to his point. He fares better with father to look after him 'n 's if he had married Susan Clara." She came out and began to make up some biscuits. "He must have thought he would eat supper there. Like's not that was it. What does ail you, child? You look's white as a sheet."

But Joyful pretended not to hear. She went out in the yard, and scattered grain to the chickens. When she came in, she was no longer pale. She had seen that the kit was gone, and she must be brave.

Her grandmother made the task easy for her. She thought

Joyful was looking forward to the long, lonely winter without Elizabeth, and essayed to cheer her. "We'll have supper now," she said, "good biscuits and honey — I guess we'll fare's well's they will, if they do have all the pies. Then you must get to bed, Joy. To-day's been wearin' with company to dinner 'nd all."

"I'll go to bed early, if you will. You must be as tired as I. You've done all the work, nearly."

"We need n't either of us sit up for father. We'll just leave the door on the latch, 'nd a light in the hall 'nd he can come in when he's a mind to, without wakin' us."

After supper Joyful went out and gazed up into the sky. The stars were thick overhead, but a dull gray fog seemed to be trailing in from the sea, hiding the bluff and the wood. Was it fog, or only the early darkness folding over the earth like a mantle? If the wind didn't blow more than this, he would n't be able to get anywhere. She longed to go down to the little pier and see if it was really fog, or if there were any more breeze on the sea, but she was afraid her grandmother would follow her, and learn that the boat was gone, so she came in and crept silently to bed. She knew this was best, and there she lay with anxiously beating heart, listening to her grandmother's steps about the house. At last she heard her go to her room. Then Joyful rose and watched the light streaming from her grandmother's window in a long path out into the darkness. It made a great white blur there as if it were shining in mist. Joyful was sure it was fog. She was glad when the light went out, and she softly stole back to her bed, but not to sleep for a long weary while. It must be fog. Oh, if the wind would only rise and blow hard enough to drive it away! At last

she heard a sighing and moving of the branches of the silver-leaf poplar overhead outside her window. It was the wind at last. It would blow the fog away. And she slept.

Soundly and sweetly she slept the happy, peaceful sleep of youth, lulled by the sound of wind that would be wings to her grandfather's boat. Nevertheless the fog thickened and the night grew black. Soundly and sweetly she slept, undisturbed by the sudden opening of doors — undisturbed by the swift rush of a figure past her room and down the stairs, and out into the thick darkness of the night. She did not hear the cry from the sea — what was it? The scream of a bird, or the call of a woman? "Father, Father, wait for me." Surely it was a woman's cry that fled through the darkness and was gone, answering some other cry calling her soul through space, unheard by any other living ears, — surely it was a woman's cry, reaching out through miles of sea space crying to the soul of one who had called to her. Far away, far, far away to seaward, a great ship struck a small one in the fog, and in a moment the small one was gone with no sound, only a sharp and terrible cry that rang out through the mist and blackness, "Marthy!"

CHAPTER XVI

ENSNARED

Adrift! Adrift in the drifting mist!
Adrift on the open sea,
With never a rudder, and never a sail,
Where rudder and sail should be.
Nay, what avail are rudder and sail
Where wind nor tide may be?
An unseen hand must guide to land,
Or the ship is lost at sea.

It was a raw, chilly day in the early part of December: The rain was driven in sharp, sleety gusts against the car windows, and as the train thundered into the vaultlike station, the smoke rose to the roof in heavy masses and then settled back on the passengers as they streamed out on the platform and hurried away in one direction. Men turned up their coat collars and walked rapidly, as if being drawn by some loadstone of purpose. Women drew their garments about them and pressed on with forward-looking eyes, as if they, too, were being drawn by that same intangible loadstone rapidly to some definite point. They walked singly, or in groups, but with no word for each other, no side glances nor idle saunterings and chatter.

Only a constant and confused murmur pervaded the place and rose from that pouring mass of humanity—outpouring like a stream hurrying to its doom in the all-engulfing ocean—when they came to an obstacle, never stopping,

but swerving around it like waves about a stone, then closing together again inevitably, and rushing on.

Borne among them, and carried along by them, and swayed to and fro with them, but never a part of them, was one small figure whose eyes looked wistfully out from under the hood of a long cloak; such a cloak as might have belonged to some respectable old lady whose clothing had been kept carefully and neatly many years. It enveloped the straight, lithe form of the girl, and wrapped about her voluminously down to the hem of her dress, quite concealing the willow basket which sagged heavily from her slender arm, and bulged the great cloak cumbrously on one side.

The little being gave no heed to other luggage than this, but broke away from the stream pouring toward the baggage room, and joined the smaller and swifter current that formed an estuary at the emptying of that great human river.

Once outside, the wind tore at her cloak, and flung it about, and she paused to gather it together closely. All around, men screamed and called out to her, and beckoned with their whips. She guessed that they wished her to ride in their carriages, but taking up her basket again, she trudged on bravely into the great world, climbing the high street, and crossing over the rough paving with the small stream she had joined at the estuary. Swiftly they passed away, unnoticed, and dispersed, she knew not whither, until she was left alone in the midst of a long, bare block, still walking valiantly on in the face of the driving sleet.

She looked up at the unending buildings, whose tops in diminishing perspective closed the narrow strip of gray,

sodden sky over her head, and she gazed down the slippery street at another perspective, longer and more unending than the height of it, while behind her she heard the rushing and roaring in the station she had just left, of the outgoing and incoming trains.

The sound made her think of the roar of the sea — the great waves rising and tossing, and falling impotently back, thundering their rage. "I suppose the noise keeps on like this all the time, and the calm never comes," she said.

Sometimes people came out from the great buildings and hurried past her. She wondered where they went. She felt hungry, and looked for a clean, dry place where she might sit quietly and eat her lunch. She looked back at the black hole — the opening of the station she had just left, and imagined she might see carved in the stone, over the entrance, the words, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." "Only the words ought really to be on the other side of that great noisy place. It would n't be abandoning all hope to go away again," she thought. She felt her cloak striking heavily and wet against her feet. "If grandmother could see, she would n't like it a bit for me to get it so draggled and wet."

She passed immense dark warehouses, and strange odors came out to her. Now she thought she smelled new shoes, and saw through the windows heaps upon heaps of leather skins piled, and still beyond her the street stretched, and many narrower and more crooked ones strayed off here and there. Should she take one of these? Perhaps they might lead to somewhere.

Pedestrians were few, but heavily loaded trucks rumbled through the streets continually, and cars loaded with

passengers jangled by. She never thought of taking one of these. Then she came to the stores with their plate-glass fronts. The goods displayed showed dimly through the steam within and the rain and sleet without. Here were more people and carriages, and she began to feel herself overcome with weariness and the confusion about her. Everything seemed so loud, and people rushed and hurried so, but no doubt they wished to get in out of the rain. Little boys screamed at her and held out papers toward her, but she pressed on and passed them by as she saw others do. At last she began to reason with herself. She must get somewhere. She could n't walk on like this forever.

Somers had given her many directions as he drove her over to Willoughby Junction in the early morning, having as much knowledge of the city and its ways as a cow might have. She must n't be afraid to ask people where she should go, and she must look out about trusting people too much, too. She must n't believe everything they told her, they might want to cheat her in some way, but she must look out not to get lost, and she must ask her way around.

So she proceeded to look earnestly into each face that passed her for some one to ask, but every one seemed pre-occupied, and walked with head lowered against the storm. No one seemed care free, only two girls who walked huddled together under one umbrella eating candy out of a paper bag. They jostled against her, but did not seem to see her.

At last a man came toward her swinging a tin dinner pail. He walked more slowly and did not appear to be minding the storm, and his face looked kindly, like her grandfather's. She spoke to him, but so low he could not hear her voice

above the street noises, yet, because she stood still and looked up in his face, he stopped and looked down at her.

"What is 't?" he asked.

She repeated her question louder. "Can you tell me where to go?"

"I can, if you'll tell me where you want to go." They drew nearer the store window, for they were jostled where they stood.

"I want to go to some place where I can find work to do, or to teach, to earn my living."

"Oh, you want to get a place. Well, where are you staying?"

"Not anywhere yet. I've only just come."

"Well, if you want to get work, and want to get it right away, you go over to that place," he pointed to a little building set in between two high ones. "That's an intelligence office. They'll tell you where to go."

She looked across the street in a bewildered way. It was not very wide, but the confusion of traffic and passing of vehicles made it seem to her well-nigh impassable. Yet others were going across; she could do what they did — and anyway she must be brave. So she lifted her head and said, "Thank you," almost as if she knew her own business, and the man walked on.

A moment she stood poised on the curbing, watching the great draft horses' feet slip about on the icy paving, and in that moment a carriage passed, and a woman with a large pallid face and small keen eyes looked out at her through the window, apprehending in one swift glance every detail.

Joyful felt the gaze, and wondered why the woman should regard her so. Was she not clean and neat and doing what

she ought? She held herself erect in her self-respecting pride, and ventured forward. Others were suddenly passing across, and a huge, blue-coated policeman was holding the vehicles back for them. She glanced up in his face with gratitude, and he saw the glance and smiled. The place she entered seemed like a country shop that had been belated and hopelessly entangled among the great buildings around it. The counter was covered with a strange assortment of clothing, and in glass cases against the wall were hung all sorts of half-worn garments with tags on them.

A woman was making change for a man who waited at the desk. She looked over the top of her glasses at Joyful. "Looking for a place?" she asked. "Go right through in there 'nd sit down. I'll 'tend to you in a minute," and Joyful passed on into an apartment curtained off from the rest of the store. Several girls and one or two women were seated around the walls, some neat and smart looking, and others slatternly and listless.

She took the only chair left vacant, and looked about her. The room was close and dark, but for a single electric bulb hanging from the ceiling. She put her basket down and undid the fastening of her cloak. She felt faint and weary, and leaned her head back and waited with closed eyes, and hands clasped in her lap. The noises of the street came to her in a confused roar, and she wondered if they ever ceased. Presently she became aware that some one was addressing her, and opened her eyes and looked into the face she had seen through the carriage window.

"Feeling faint?" The voice was low and quiet, and sounded almost indifferent, but the eyes were bright and keen.

"Yes."

"Looking for a place?"

"Yes."

"Where did you come from? What kind of a place do you want?"

The woman with the glasses came in and began speaking to one of the others. She turned to the questioner. "We don't know anything about her; she's just come in." She took a pencil from her hair and began writing on a card which she handed to one of the girls. "The name of the place is on that card. You can bring the dollar in a week," she said. "What did you say your name is?" she turned from one to another in a curt way.

"My name is Joyful Heatherby."

The pallid woman took the chair just vacated, and drew it nearer Joyful. "I will question her while you look after the rest, if you are hurried," she said quietly.

Then Joyful straightened herself and sat very rigid, trying to keep her lip from quivering while she answered all the questions carefully and conscientiously.

The woman did not smile nor show the least surprise in her impassive countenance when Joyful told her she had come to Boston to get a place in a young ladies' school to teach French. She did not ask her credentials nor references, nor did she tell her this was not the place to go to look for such a position. She put her questions very quietly, and the shop woman was too busy to heed the low, broken replies as Joyful told of her home, and the loss of all but a few scattered friends; for she had not yet heard from Elizabeth when she left the lonely little cottage.

"Well, I keep a young ladies' school; I guess you'll do

for the place." And Joyful's heart bounded at her quick success. It was past the noon hour, and she had breakfasted long before daylight, and had not known where to go for food or lodging, but she had thought she might ask the woman who kept the shop. She had a little money in the bosom of her dress, which she thought would keep her for a time until she could find work. Now she rose gladly to follow the woman out.

Then the shop woman addressed her. "You can pay the dollar next week," she said. "It's for getting you the place," she explained, noting Joyful's look of surprise.

"Oh, is it a dollar? I can pay it now."

"Better wait until you see how you like the place."

"She'll be sure to like it," said the other woman, handing out her own fee. "You take orders for cleaning and dyeing? I'll send down some things, and I'll see that her dollar is paid, myself." She gave the shop woman a card, and they passed out, leaving her scrutinizing it keenly through her glasses.

"Who's Madame Redding La Grande?" she asked of her assistant, who was busy doing up the dyed garments in packages, and marking them.

"I don't know. You'd better keep the card. You may want it."

In the carriage Madame Redding La Grande occupied the whole of the back seat, and placed Joyful on a low seat facing her, with her basket at her side, and they drove away in silence. The windows of the vehicle were tightly closed, and the air was heavy and fetid. A wild desire seized Joyful to jump out and escape, or to strike at the woman before her and scream out like a child. She did not like the

narrow, watchful look that was fixed on her face through half-closed lids, and at length she became unable to look at the woman's countenance with its immovable lines, so she closed her eyes, and clasped her hands tightly beneath her cloak to keep them from trembling. It seemed only a moment after that she was revived by a draft of cool, damp air across her face, and she roused herself wonderingly to see the woman outside the coach, holding the door open and speaking to her.

"You seem pretty tired," the woman was saying, "and no doubt you've had no lunch. You can go right to your room, and I'll send you up some tea."

The tone was cool and monotonous, but the words were kind, and Joyful tried to feel that she liked her, as she followed her up stone steps into a house that seemed to her grand enough to be a palace—where the ceilings were very high, and mirrors reached from the floor to the cornice—where the carpets were soft and thick, and velvet curtains hung in the doorways.

The grandeur and richness of it all filled her imagination, and overpowered her. She staggered as she stood in the great hall and gazed into the rooms opening from it, but Madame La Grande did not see this. She went steadily on up the stairs. "Come," she said, without pausing or looking back, and Joyful gathered all her strength, and followed. Up one flight of stairs, and then another and narrower flight, and along a hall to a small room at the far end, she crept. Why her heart sank within her at every step, she could not tell. Surely this was splendor beyond her wildest imaginings.

"There. This will be your room for a while, until

you're used to your duties and the ways of the house. You would better change your clothes, and clean up a little, and rest. I'll send you something to eat, and then we'll have a talk later. Is this all you have, just this basket?"

"I have a trunk, a small one; but I left it at the station. They gave me this when I started, and told me to send for it when I knew where I was to be." She held out the brass check.

"That's right. Give it to me, and I'll have the trunk sent to your room as soon as it comes."

"It won't come until they get that. Mr. Somers said so."

The woman did not smile at Joyful's simplicity. She went away, taking the check with her. "Very well, I'll see to it," she said.

For a moment, Joyful stood still in the middle of the room, thinking in a dazed way. How had it all come about, just as she wished, and so quickly! She wondered where the young ladies were whom she was going to teach. She had seen none. Then she spread the great cloak on a chair to dry, and unpacked the basket. Besides a change of underclothing and other necessities, it contained one gingham dress, a few collars and ribbons, and a few French books. These last she arranged on a table with her prayer book and hymnal and Bible. Then she removed her damp clothing, but before she had redressed herself Madame La Grande returned with a stupid-looking maid bearing tea and bread and butter.

She had knocked and then entered without waiting for a response, and Joyful shrank back dismayed and abashed at her uncovered condition, but this the woman did not seem to notice. She dismissed the maid and placed the

tray herself on Joyful's little table, shoving the books to one side to make room for it. She laid out some dry stockings and underwear. "I thought maybe you did n't have dry things with you," she said.

Joyful cowered behind the skirts she had not had time to don. "Thank you, yes, I have them, but — you are very kind." She wished the woman would go away, and stood shivering and waiting.

"You would better put on your clothes, before you take cold," said the woman, eying her critically. She seated herself beside the table and poured out the tea. "You have a rarely good figure, but you're far too pale. Don't you ever have any more color?"

Joyful saw that she had no intention of taking her departure, so she scrambled into her clothing as rapidly as possible, and sat down in confusion and shame. Madame La Grande poured two cups of tea, and put a little liquor in each from a small flask which she took from a cupboard in the wall.

"I'll leave this here, so you can have it when you need it. It's good to keep you from taking cold, and — for a good many other things. If you should get homesick or blue, it will set you up and make you feel all right. Well, you have color enough now. I guess you'll not be too pale, as a general thing. Now drink this and eat a little. You needn't look so frightened. You'll find it very nice here, and the girls are all kind-hearted."

Joyful took the cup from her hand and tasted it, and forced herself to swallow a few mouthfuls of food, but she could not speak. She tried to say something, but her throat closed spasmodically, and she remained silent.

"When your trunk comes, you would better put on something a little more dressy to come down to dinner in. The house is warmed by steam, so you won't be cold, if you wear something thin. The girls dress a good deal at dinner, and you'll want to be one of them, you know."

"I'm afraid I have n't much to wear that you will like. I have never lived in a place like this before."

"Oh, well — you'll soon fall into the ways here, and you can get other things as you need them."

"When will the lessons begin?" asked Joyful, timidly. She wanted to ask how much she was to receive for them, but her throat closed on the question unuttered.

"Oh, any time the girls like. Would n't you better drink up the rest of your tea?" Then Joyful drank her tea, and presently she felt the exhilaration of it, and her cheeks brightened. "Now you feel better, don't you?" Madame La Grande rose and stood looking down at her. "We dine at seven. After you're rested, you might come down and sit until dinner — if your trunk comes in time."

Joyful rose and looked up into the impassive face gravely. "Thank you. You are very kind to me," she said. She longed to throw her arms around her neck and cry on her bosom, but no. She could not touch the woman — she knew not why. So she stood, with heart throbbing to express its loneliness and its longing, and with arms that ached to embrace a dear one hanging straight at her side, and Madame La Grande left her standing thus, and shut the door softly as she went.

CHAPTER XVII

AFTER THE MANNER OF THE WORLD

But of the man? Nay, that is neither here nor there—
For he was but a man,—and she, they say, was fair.
So let it pass. Alas!

AN hour crept slowly away. Joyful sat with her grandfather's great silver watch, gazing at the circling second hand spinning round and round. Her eyes filled with tears which she constantly wiped away. Presently she heard a heavy step along the hall, and a man entered, who carelessly deposited her small trunk on the floor. Then he stood a moment looking at her and grinning unpleasantly. She thought he wanted pay, so she opened her pocket-book.

"It's been paid for," he said, and strode off.

She hated the man's grin. "He must have seen I had been crying," she thought. So she crowded back her tears, and washed her face to hide their traces. "Grand-daddy" would like her to be brave. Then she opened her trunk, and put on the pink dimity dress. She loved the white one better, but this must do. She would save the other for Sunday. She hoped Madame La Grande would not want her to wear her best things every day. She could not afford that.

She thought of Elizabeth, so far away—perhaps across the ocean, and knowing nothing of her sorrow—and again her tears flowed; but she felt ashamed to cry any

more, since she had found a position the very first thing, and could begin to earn her own living at once. Then she knelt beside her bed, and prayed that she might teach well, and that those she loved might be kept from harm. How few they were! Mrs. Drew and Elizabeth first, and then Nathanael, and Mr. Thorn, and last of all Jack. But she did not pray that he might come back to her, as in her heart she did of the others. No. If he came back now, she would have no more excuse, and would have to marry him — perhaps.

It grew dark in the room, and she went out in the hall, which was dimly lighted at the far end. The place seemed as silent as the grave, and no one was to be seen. A sense of dread stole over her, and her nerves tingled as she crept slowly, peering into the shadows, to the end of the corridor and down the stairs.

Here two lights were burning, and the gilt brass fixtures seemed splendid to her. She passed closed doors, and thought she heard voices behind some of them. Her feet sank deep in the velvet carpet, and the silence of her own tread seemed uncanny. Suddenly she stood still, appalled. A crash, and the sound of breaking glass, accompanied by wild shrieks of laughter, sounded through an open transom overhead. She clung to the stair railing, trembling and white. Why did they laugh like that? Were they the ones she was to teach? She would never be able to manage girls who laughed that way. Then the door was thrown open and a young woman swept out. Joyful thought her the most beautiful being she had ever looked upon.

She seemed more diaphanous than real. Her head had a pretty tilt like the head of a bird, as she stood a moment

looking down at Joyful. Her neck and arms were bare, and she moved along as if she were borne on her swirling draperies instead of treading the ground. She would have passed on, but the sad appeal in Joyful's eyes drew her back.

"What do you want?" she said pleasantly. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Only to show me where to go, thank you. I am the new French teacher, and Madame La Grande told me to go down to the parlor when I was ready."

"The new — what?" The young woman's voice had a note of dismay, and her eyebrows lifted.

"I am to teach French here."

"Oh, I understand." She smiled and closed the door quickly after her of the room she had just left. "Well — don't go to the parlor. Come with me to my room — it will be pleasanter. Were you frightened at the noise? It is only Bess and Nan acting like lunatics. One of them kicked over the table with all the glasses."

She floated on ahead of Joyful the whole length of the corridor, and threw open a door into a large and luxuriously furnished apartment. A bed with wonderfully embroidered counterpane stood in an alcove, and there were divans and cushions, and window seats and cushions, and deep chairs and cushions — Joyful thought there were cushions enough to furnish twenty homes. On a beautiful inlaid French dressing table were many silver articles, and on the walls were pictures in gold frames of little cupids, and beautiful ladies. Disposed about on shelves and tables were vases and lamps of gold and green, and figures in white marble, and on the floor were footstools and rich rugs.

Joyful gazed with amazement, while the older girl smilingly watched her. Presently her eyes fastened on a piece of tapestry representing a man in fancy costume, bowing, hat in hand, to a lady equally ornate as to dress.

"Do you like that?" asked the girl.

"I don't know. I always thought Louise De la Vallière much more beautiful than that."

"Why?"

"I don't see how she could charm the heart of a king otherwise — and he —"

"Go on. What of him?" Still she paused. "Come. What is it about him?"

"I'm afraid I'm not very polite, criticizing your pictures."

The girl laughed. "I don't care. What is it?"

"He looks just like a dressed-up doll I saw once."

Then the girl laughed again, and there was a quality in the laugh that struck Joyful unpleasantly. She turned and looked at her gravely.

"I don't care what you say about my pictures, you're unique. Come and sit here beside me, you pretty little pink thing, you!"

"I will sit here, thank you," said Joyful, taking a chair facing her. She sank far down in its cushioned depths and seemed lost.

"No, sit here beside me. That's a man's chair."

"I'm afraid I shall crush your beautiful dress."

"No, you won't." She gathered the pile of shimmering ruffles about her. "Here's a place. I wish to talk with you comfortably, and I can't while your great eyes stare at me so."

Joyful took the seat timidly. She was hurt. "I did n't

mean to stare at you — but — you are more beautiful than any one I ever saw before."

The girl gave a low, soft laugh of pleasure. "I've been told that before, but never by a girl," she said. She put her arms about Joyful and drew her close. "Come. Don't be so stiff. Snuggle up here and tell me where you come from. How did you know that was a picture of Louise De la Vallière and old Louis?"

"Oh, I have read about them in my books. I love Marie Antoinette best of all, don't you? I'm glad we live nowadays, when people are not so wicked as that old king was."

The girl's lips curled. "He was only a bad old man, just like the men nowadays."

Joyful lifted her head and looked in the girl's face. "Bad?"

"Yes, bad, bad, bad!" Her eyes glowed, and the last words were almost screamed in Joyful's ears. "I tell you half the men — more than half — are worse than old Louis, and they are willing to make us like themselves. I know what they are. I understand them."

Joyful tried to rise, but was drawn back and held in those quivering bare arms.

In her mind the historic sins were shrouded in the romance of mystery, like the sins of the Greek gods. She had never learned to connect the thought of active evil with the present age. Her grandfather had read the newspapers down at the village store at home, giving expurgated accounts of the world's happenings, and her grandmother had subscribed to a weekly church paper and a small missionary sheet that came into the house once a month; while Joyful had dreamed out her happy little life with her

old books, and was filled with a strange wisdom that went straight to the heart of things without circumlocution or sophistries. Now she lay there — crushed, like a hurt creature, wondering and frightened.

Presently the girl laughed again, and released her, then drew her close as before, and petted her. "There! I have scared you. Never mind. I am very angry just now — at a man — but we'll talk of something pleasant." She rose and lighted a lamp with a pink shade that cast a rosy glow over them both. "Ah, you look like a pink rose now, à la France. You pretty thing — you'd captivate any one. You'd draw the heart out of a mandrake. She's a cute one, Madame La Grande is. Tell me now everything about yourself. Who are you, and how on earth did you get in here? She found you and brought you, I'll warrant."

A feeling of reserve came upon Joyful, and she drew away, but the girl seized her again forcefully.

"Don't draw away from me. I can't bear it. You come from the country, don't you? You're as fragrant as the hills, and as fresh and sweet as a wild flower, and you have thorns, too, no doubt. If I were walking on a hillside, and should see a wild rose, I would snatch it and hold it, and love it, even if the thorns drew blood from my very heart. Tell me, why do you shrink from me? Is it a feeling inside you as though I were — as though you don't wish to be too near me — to touch me —?"

There was a pathetic quiver in the voice, and Joyful was moved for the first time to active responsiveness. She put up her hand and touched the girl's cheek with timid yet tender caress.

"No, no. You are so beautiful, I would rather sit

where I can look at you. You are not like a rose, as you say I am, but you are a white lily, only not cold and proud like one, but so wonderful and beautiful. You are like a dream girl, and here I am crushing your lovely dress. Are you going to a party? Do you dress like this every day?"

"No, and yes. At least, sometimes I do." She gave a short, derisive laugh, and Joyful shrank from her as before. "What is the matter?"

"Why do you laugh that way? I saw a man smile once, and his smile looked as your laugh sounds."

"So? You are sensitive to moods. I was thinking of the aptness of your comparison. White lilies are put on the altars of churches, and in the hands of brides. Well, it may come to the same thing at last. After a time they are thrown into the ash heap, or in the gutter."

She reached over her head and touched a bell, and a boy appeared, wearing a green suit with brass buttons.

"Jim, have two dinners sent up this evening — a bottle of champagne and one glass. Hear? One glass."

The boy nodded and went away.

"What a pretty suit he wears," said Joyful.

"Yes?" This time the girl's laugh was a merry one. "You noticed I said one glass. That was because I shall give you no champagne. I am going to keep you as you are, and not let you get spoiled. I shall have your dinners sent up with mine. You shall not eat with those common girls who go down in the restaurant below."

"Am I to teach them French?"

The girl bit her lip. "Possibly," she said carelessly. "You can teach me French, at any rate. Now go on. Tell me about yourself. How came you to learn it?"

So the two sat there in the warm rosy light, the stained and the innocent, close clasped in each other's arms, heart beating against heart, while Joyful told the story of her simple, sweet young life, and the sorrow that had come into it, and when she finished, the tears were rolling down the girl's cheeks, and it was Joyful who essayed to comfort her, and not she Joyful.

The dinners had been brought and were getting cold. "Don't mind me," said the girl. "I laugh when I'm sorry and cry when I'm glad. I have n't been so happy in three years. I have n't held anything so pure and sweet in my arms. It's like holding a baby." Then she pushed her away and laughed. "I can't hold you forever. This is only a mood — a moment. Now we must eat."

Then she bathed her face, and touched it lightly here and there with powder and a dab of rouge. "You see, I must n't be ugly, whatever I do — only I have n't arrived at the hair-bleaching stage yet. That comes later."

The look Joyful gave her was uncomprehending. "You never could be ugly, if you tried. What is the hair-bleaching stage? Getting gray? You won't be gray for years and years. That red on your cheeks makes you look a little feverish. You were prettier without it."

"Then I'll wash it off. There — is that better? You see it's just a part of my dress, the red is. Call me Marie. That is my name — Marie Vaile. Yours is the prettiest name."

"Marie? Why between us we make Marie Antoinette, the queen of sorrows. My middle name is Antoinette, after my mother."

"So? Then don't let Madame La Grande call you Joyful. Tell her you wish to be called Antoinette."

"Why? I have always been called Joyful."

"So I supposed, but here I would n't go by that name — because — Antoinette is more Frenchy, you know — and if you are to teach French, it would be best to be in keeping with your French name."

"Yes. I hope they'll like me. Don't you think I was very fortunate to find a situation so soon? But I suppose I ought to make some arrangement about — how much I am to receive — ought I not? She didn't say anything about that."

"Didn't she? Well, eat, little pink rose, eat. Don't worry. I'll ask her to let me have your services alone for a little while — a few weeks — until —"

There was a sharp rap at the door, and Marie, with a frown of impatience, rose. "There she is after you, no doubt. You stay right here and don't stir." She went out, closing the door quickly after her.

Joyful felt her heart beating up in her very throat. For the first time in her life she feared. She was afraid of Madame La Grande. When at last Marie returned — a long time it had seemed to Joyful — her step was buoyant, and her face wore an expression of triumph. She said nothing, but leaned back, sipping her wine, and regarding Joyful intently. Presently she raised her glass between her eye and the light, and then lifted it high above her head.

"Here's to Madame La Grande. May she soon die and be buried and rot," she cried, and drank to the last drop. "Don't be scared, child, this bottle is n't half gone yet. I'm sorry you can't have any. Look here. Look in my eyes. Tell me. Don't you think she's charming?"

"Who?"

"Madame La Grande." She poured herself another glass, and drank it off, and then filled the glass again and put it to her lips. Joyful turned pale and caught her hand.

"Oh, why do you? Don't drink it. I'm sure it's not good for you."

"Yes it is. It keeps me up."

But Joyful still held her hand. "Then if it's good for you, why don't you give it to me? Dear, beautiful Marie — tell me — tell me what is the matter here? What is it you know that I must not know?"

"Nothing, child, nothing. I'm so constituted that I have the gift of hating. You need n't be horrified — do you like her, yourself?"

"I don't know. I feel a little — I never was afraid of any one before."

"I believe you. Listen, child —" she pointed to a door opening from her apartment at the side. "They are moving your things in there. Your room is to be right here, close to mine, and you are to teach me and stay near me, and I have promised her all kinds of things in regard to you — I've told her lies enough to turn your hair gray — bleach it, you know."

The lad in the green suit interrupted them. He brought Marie a card. She rose and ran to the mirror. "Wait a minute," she said, and hastily writing something on the back of the card, returned it to the boy. "Give him that," and the boy went out. Then turning to Joyful she placed her two hands on her shoulders and looked down in her face. "Listen," she spoke rapidly, "go into that next room and lock your doors, and stay there until I come to you. You — you can't understand — but this school is

— it is n't managed very well and — some of the pupils are a little rude. You won't like them — brought up as you have been — I'm going to see that you are happy here. Even if I have never seen you before — I love you, and you must trust me and do what I say. Will you? That room is much nicer than the one you were in. It has every convenience — and — don't be worried, dear, I will be near you. You — you'll trust me?"

Joyful lifted her arms and placed them around the girl's neck. Her eyes filled with tears. "I'll do whatever you say — I don't understand — but —"

Marie took her in her arms and strained her close. Joyful thought she heard her breathe the words, "Oh, God!" "Now hurry, dear," she said. "Some one is coming. Take the tray with you — I don't wish anything more. Here, give me the wine. I'll come soon."

Joyful passed into the next room, and Marie turned the key in the lock after her. Then she drank the rest of the wine in the glass, and placing the bottle on the table turned facing the door and stood still in the middle of the floor waiting. She heard the rap, but said nothing. Then the door was pushed open and Scott Stevens entered. He closed the door softly after him and paused before her. She did not speak.

"Well, I am here."

"I see."

"Why did you send for me?"

"Because I was tired of being here without you."

She stood in the warm red glow, with her arms dropped at her side, straight and tall, her small head poised high, and her brilliant eyes fixed on his. He continued to gaze

on her as if fascinated, then took a step nearer and held out his arms. She stepped back.

"You might at least shake hands." She was silent. "Well, I can be seated, at any rate. I have n't long to stay, so we may as well talk while I am here."

He threw aside his hat and coat, and dropped into the great chair Joyful had seemed lost in. He was in evening dress, and as he slowly removed his gloves, Marie watched him, still standing, and without turning her head. How white his hands were — like a woman's — and he wore a flower in his buttonhole — a tuberoses. The odor seemed to fill the room. How she hated it! Some woman had placed it there, no doubt. He reached out and took her impassive hand and drew her toward him, pulling her down to a seat on the cushioned arm of the chair in which he sat.

"Now, this is more comfortable. What is it, Marie? Have n't the bills been paid promptly?"

"I hate the smell of that flower," she said. "Who put it there?"

"Very well, it is gone." He took it out and thrust it in his vest pocket. "Now what? Come, kiss me. What a cold reception this is!"

She turned her head away so that he could only see the curve of her cheek and the tip of her perfect chin. "No, I did n't ask you to come here to kiss me. You must come of your own accord for that."

"But I will kiss you, and I am here of my own accord." He touched his lips to her shoulder and drew her down until her head rested on his breast. "You play the very devil with me, Marie, — all my good resolutions fly to the winds when I get here with you."

"Good resolutions?"

"Yes — good resolutions. You've heard of such things, have n't you? I must lead a very different life — you know — sometime." She lifted her head, but he drew it down again and patted her cheek. "Things can't go on forever in the same way — you know. I have a place to fill in the world, and I must fill it respectably. Come, now, listen sensibly. I will provide for you. You need n't fear. I'll see that you have everything you need — everything you want, even."

"Then it's true — you are going to —"

"Marry? Yes, and live straight."

She struggled from his grasp to her feet and stood before him a moment with her hand at her throat. Then she spoke slowly, with white, dry lips.

"Marry? Live straight? Good resolutions? I — I play the devil with them? Scott Stevens, if there is such a thing in the universe as a personal devil, you are he."

"Marie, be reasonable."

"I was never more so. You! You! Look at yourself. Who are you? What are you?" Suddenly she threw her arms above her head and dropped on her knees at his side and clasped her hands on his breast. "Don't kill me. Oh, I shall die! You — you promised. Don't you remember when you came and took me from my home, my sweet home? Think what you promised. I threw away everything. I gave you my soul, Scott. We are married, you and I. If there is a God, He knows we are married. You can't leave me."

"I promised — yes — there are times when a man will promise anything." He took her hands in his, and she bowed

her head upon them, shaking and sobbing. "Now, Marie, this is of no use. It had to come sometime, you know. When it comes to marrying, a man can't marry a girl who has done what you have —" he paused.

"Go on, go on. Say all you have to say."

"That's all, Marie."

"You knew all the time that you could turn around some day and be respectable, and I could not?" She drew back, and once more stood before him, cold and white with passion. "You can sit there and smile? An hour ago I could have put a knife into your heart — now I would n't soil my hands with your blood. Respectable man! A girl, because she loves a man, spends on him all the gold of her heart. A woman, lavish of her love, because she adores, and lays her soul at the feet of a man, may not be respectable — while he — he may take it all — may lure her to the very doors of hell, and then — if he will only leave her there, and go his own straight way, he is respectable — faugh! Take your respectability. Go out among your kind, and hold up your head. A man knows no shame. Society loves a man with a stain."

"See here, Marie, I'll have no more of this."

"No, you will be respectable. I love respectability. Come, let's be respectable together."

"You may remain in these apartments as long as you wish —"

"With a viper to stand guard over me —"

She was losing ground in her frenzy, and he coolly, relentlessly talked on. "I will leave you enough to pay all your bills — how much do you need?"

"Nothing."

"If you wish, I will send you back to your father."

"I will never go back to England. They think I am dead. It's too respectable there."

"Here, I have placed this sum in the bank to your account; you can draw it as you need. You can keep these apartments as long as you wish —"

"Oh, Scott, did n't I tell you I sent for you because I was tired of being here without you? Now — if you leave me here in this way — I can never get away — that cat will keep me. Scott, I will not go one step deeper in the mire for you. You must not leave me here. Scott, oh, Scott, when you took me away from my beautiful England, did n't you love me, Scott? All those long sweet days up and down the Mediterranean — we two — so happy — you said you loved me. I did n't care what became of me then, because I had you. I wish you had never brought me back to land. You would have been kinder, if you had thrown me into the sea — then — while I was happy. You remember how the sharks used to swim around the boat and gleam white in the water? I wish I had leaped over the side, and they had eaten me. Take me away again, Scott. Sail with me away in that summer sea again. All your love will come back — look at me — I am beautiful still. You know it, Scott. Have you found a woman more beautiful than I?"

"No." But he knew in his heart he had found one harder to win.

"Do men never love after they have won? Do they always turn away from those who trust them?"

Scott rose and sauntered about the room. He could not sit there and watch the beautiful girl before him un-

moved, and he had determined on his course, and was not to be swerved from it. At last he turned on her cruelly.

"Marie — what the devil — You know I never can marry you and introduce you as my wife in the circle in which I move. It's a moral impossibility — and what's more —"

"Then keep out of that circle yourself. Stay where you belong, if doing an honorable thing throws you outside the pale of respectability. You choose the immoral possibility to the moral impossibility, do you? Very well, I stay here — in hell, where you have placed me — but not for long. You go your respectable way. Go and let some respectable girl promise to love, honor, and obey you. She will never do it as honestly as I have done it, for you will carry the lie of your life in your soul, and she will find it out. Honor you will never have. If there is a God, — before Him your soul lies deeper in the pit than mine. Here, take your bank notes with you, or I will burn them."

"You may do as you wish. You have the last word. Remember the rental of these apartments is only paid until the first of January."

He went out without looking at her again. If he had, he knew he would not have left. He had indulged too much in these little side sins. He must stop sowing wild oats. A man had to settle down and be respectable sometime.

CHAPTER XVIII

A REBUFF

"And this wind, that doth sing so in your ears,
I know is no disease bred in yourself,
But whispered in by others, who, in swelling
Your veins with empty hopes of much, yet able
To perform nothing, are like shallow streams,
That make themselves so many heavens to sight,
Since you may see in them the moon and stars,
The blue space of the air, as far from us,
To our weak senses, in those shallow streams,
As if they were as deep as heaven is high ;
Yet, with your middle finger only sound them,
And you shall pierce them to the very earth."

—CHAPMAN, *Byron's Conspiracy*.

THE snow was falling softly, silently, and Boston city showed through its whiteness mysterious and faint — a dream city, moonlike in its ghostliness. Scott Stevens buttoned his coat about him warmly, and swore under his breath. His feet sank in the white carpet of snow, and left dark imprints of muddy slush as he walked.

"This going is vile," he muttered, and turned to look for a cab. "Why, Hallo! Thorn. Thought you were in New York. You go sauntering along, gazing about as if you liked this sort of thing. Here, Hi!" he called, shaking his cane at a cabby just swinging round the corner. "Take this cab with me. Let's get out of this." He climbed quickly in the cab, as it drew up at the curbing, and held the door open for Mark to follow.

"Why, I don't know," said Mark, laughing. He stood with coat thrown open and hands in his pockets. "I believe I rather like the world in this condition. Come out here and look about you before you crawl in there like a snail. I'll invite you to walk with me." He looked up at the darkness of the sky, and off over the city, with its million lights emphasizing the whiteness of the veil which the Almighty was spreading over it.

"Oh, you artists are a devilishly careless lot. No, it may be beautiful overhead, but, as the postman said, 'I'm not traveling that way,' and it's death of pneumonia underfoot."

Mark took hold of something which projected from his coat pocket, and felt of it to see if it was all there. Scott still held the door of the cab open. "What have you there?" he asked.

"Paint brushes wrapped in a rag. Taking them home to wash."

"The deuce you are. I thought your studio was in New York now. Come, get in here. Get in before the thing fills up with snow. I want to talk with you." Mark took another look about him, and then stepped slowly in. Scott brushed off the snow which had fallen in on his clothing, and directed the cabman to drive to his club. "You may like it, but I'm not partial to snow, myself. I shall leave for other parts of the globe as soon as I can make my arrangements. Where are you now?"

"Still in New York. I'm only here finishing up that mural work in Mervain Thompson's music room."

"Oh, you're doing that? I thought you would get it when Thompson saw those panels in my yacht. He ad-

mired them tremendously. I put in a good word for you — ought to bring you quite a sum. Thompson has the money, you know."

"It's not so great. I was glad to do it for other considerations."

"Of course. Splendid advertisement, great piece like that, and where the right people see it. Now those panels have been constantly admired."

Mark smiled. He refrained from mentioning that he had been at work on designs for that music room before Stevens ever thought of panels for his yacht. He took the patronizing with stoical philosophy, as one of the disagreeable adjuncts of his profession — an inevitable fact where such men as Stevens were concerned, and the man before him contentedly talked on.

"Yes, they have made quite a sensation. You were particularly happy in the one from Miss Parsons. It's by far the finest of the three."

"Think so? I prefer the one Mrs. Renolds posed for, myself."

"That's just it. I've always heard artists themselves were the poorest judges of their own work, and this proves it. Why, either of the others are better than that. I defy any one who did not know Mrs. Renolds posed for it to see a trace of her, and she's a remarkably beautiful woman, too."

"Oh, well — I thought myself entitled to the artist's privilege of idealizing."

"I've noticed this, too. An artist is never content to take a beautiful thing exactly as he finds it. He's always trying to idealize. Oh, I'm not criticizing, you understand.

I'm satisfied. Beautiful work, every one of them. Every one says so. You know, Thorn, it came over me in a flash as I stood before Miss Parsons' picture to-day, what a howling success you would be if you only had such a model — the monopoly I mean — of such a model, one from whom you could create a type. I believe the right sort of a model is as essential to the success of an artist as genius."

"A good model is certainly a great help. They're hard to get, professionally, you know. I've never yet seen one from whom I would be willing to create a type, as you call it. Perhaps I'm not idealist enough for that —"

"Oh, idealist go hang! That's your hobby. I believe it's what holds you back. The public don't care for idealism. You must make a success of yourself first, then you can do what you please with the public. Train them to appreciate idealism. They don't care a cent about it now — it's all whim with the public. There are only a few of us who have the courage of our convictions — who dare take you on faith."

"Most kind of you, I'm sure. I think I must leave you at this corner. I go to my aunt's."

"No, no. Let me take you to the door. This is no night to be on foot."

"About that question of the model, I may need one. Good models are scarce —"

"I know just the one for you — a little English girl. I don't know that she has ever done anything of the kind, but she might be induced to. She's the most perfect thing your eyes ever rested on, and the beauty of it is she's unprofessional — unspoiled. If you could get her, you wouldn't have to idealize. She's ready made to your hand. She's everything — plastic — subtle —"

"How did you happen to find her?"

"Oh, I saw her first in England — little seaport town where I happened to touch. I stayed there some time and saw considerable of her, and now she's in this country. I've just been in to call on her." He took a card from his pocket and scratched on the back her name and address. "You'll find her there, chaperoned by the woman from whom she has her apartments. She's a lonely little thing — been unfortunate, I guess, but mighty independent. You'll have to find out a way to get at her. Better not let her know I suggested this; she'd never do it in the world — too proud. She's of good family, you know — not one of your common sort, by any means. I've an idea you'd be doing her a service, and she's one you could get a monopoly on."

Mark took the card in an absent-minded way, and thrust it in his pocket. "Thank you, thank you. I'll think about it." He peered out into the night. "I'm here, I think. Yes." He called to the cabman, and they stopped.

"Good night," said Scott, "I'm glad we met."

"Thanks — so am I."

"You take my suggestion about that model — you won't regret it."

"Oh, yes. Well, I'll think about it. Thank you. Good night."

Mark strolled off through the obscurity and slowly mounted the steps of a dignified Beacon Street home. Mrs. Parsons would have found it hard to forgive him had he made any hired lodging his headquarters while she was in Boston. As he stood in the vestibule, shaking the snow from his greatcoat, she came out to meet him.

"Why, Mark! How late you have worked! We waited

supper for you, and then Louise had a meeting she thought she must attend, and so we gave you up."

Mark kissed her. "You must never wait for me, Aunt Kate, I'm such an uncertain quantity."

"I would n't, if I thought you would ever think of anything to eat if left to yourself — what on earth you do in New York, with no one to think for you, I can't imagine. Have you had any dinner?"

"Why, come to think of it, I don't believe I have — but you must n't let me make trouble. I was just going to a restaurant when Scott Stevens picked me up, and brought me here. Can't I go out and wait on myself?"

"No, Mark. I told Stokes to keep something hot, and it will be on the table in a moment."

"That's the way you spoil me. If you'd let me go hungry, or make me help myself, don't you see — Where's Louise, did you say?"

"Oh, she's become a kind of an Oriental nowadays. I don't know whether she's Hindoo or Mahomedan, but she has gone to one of those meetings where they talk all kinds of pagan nonsense. The coupé has gone for her, so I think she'll soon return. She has given up eating meat now, and lives mostly on rice and tabasco sauce, and dates and nuts."

Mrs. Parsons looked anxious and worried. As she talked, she preceded Mark into the dining room, and sat with him while he ate. "I don't know whatever is to become of Louise. She has now one of the strangest notions in her head."

"Oh, they'll all pass, Auntie; you know they always do."

"I don't know. She says she does n't believe in marriage. I do wish, Mark, that you would just bring her to the point and marry her and done with it."

"I will, Aunt. I've gotten my affairs at last so I know what I'm doing — suppose I send for a minister or a magistrate and marry her as soon as she comes in."

"Oh, Mark! Do talk sense."

"That's very good sense. I've got to marry her as soon as I have brought her to the point, as you say, or she will not be there when I come again."

"I know, but I think, Mark, if you really cared — or I mean appeared to care a little more — she would — How long is it since you were here last? Three weeks? — and now — I don't want to appear to criticize you, Mark, but you see how careless you seem. You send word you will dine with us this evening, and we wait, until at last she has to go; then you come sauntering in as if you had never thought of her."

"You're right, by Jove! I became engrossed in that house, and before I knew it, the workmen were all gone, and there I was alone in the dark, and as cold as Greenland. It's going to be a fine thing, though, Aunt Kate. You and Louise must come and see it to-morrow. I got a chance last summer at a splendid woman's head for my central figure in the Tannhäuser group, Elizabeth — and by all the saints — her name is Elizabeth, too. I had forgotten that."

"Was it that charming little unfinished thing in a spatter of golden light to which Louise took such a fancy? I would hardly think that face a good type for Elizabeth."

"That? Oh, no. Indeed, no. As different as—" Mark stopped talking, and stared straight before him a moment. Then he rose, and placing his arm about his aunt, led her into the library, and sat beside her, gazing into the open fire. The flames leaped and danced. He leaned forward and

stirred the lumps of coal, but what he really saw was Joyful Heatherby, moving among tall forest trees, now in shade and now in shifting sunlight, with the azure and gold and green scarf fluttering about her.

"Don't you think — Mark —"

"Yes, Aunt." He came back to his present with a start. "Yes, you are undeniably right. Yet it is really not so much indifference as it seems. You remember what she said to me last spring at the exhibition? She has said it many times since. I must succeed, she will never have me else, and I don't know why she should. No man who is not a success wishes to offer himself to a woman, and success means in my case devotion to my art; and inversely that means, in my case, devotion to Louise." The outer door opened, and a light step was heard in the hall.

"There she is, Mark." His aunt rose and, bending, kissed him on his brow. "I'm going to leave you. Remember, dear, I think you have met with quite success enough to satisfy any girl."

"To satisfy you, Aunt." She smiled back at him, and glided noiselessly away with her finger on her lips.

"Mamma Kate." The heavy hangings were pushed open behind him, and Louise stood there, queenly beautiful. She still wore her hat and cloak. "Why, Mark! Is it you? I thought I heard voices. Where is Mamma Kate?"

"She was here, but she is gone." He came toward her, his face suddenly radiant, his hands extended.

"We gave you up, Mark, and —"

He caught her in his arms and swung her into the room. "You did? Well, I have n't given you up. Kiss me, Louise, kiss me."

She lifted her face and gave him a calm little kiss. "There, then, Mark, let go of me."

He held her off at arm's length. "Cool and calm, and beautiful as a dream. You make me think of an Arctic night, and the aurora borealis. You are never at fault in your dress, whatever you may be in your kissing. Pale blue cloth and heaps of white fur—pale blue hat and a white plume and a white dove, by Jove! Pale gold hair, like gold on a sky of blue, and eyes blue as the heavens. Mighty lovely, but rather cold, Louise."

She smiled and began to unfasten her cloak. "Now you have taken my inventory, you may help me off with my things. Thanks. Lay them out in the hall, they are full of the cold." She sank in the large chair, and held out her hands to the fire. "I believe I will have some wine, Mark. Ring for Stokes, will you? I feel quite chilled."

Mark fetched the wine himself, and then sat opposite her, watching her while she sipped it.

"Have a glass yourself, Mark. It will be more sociable."

"Thank you, I am warm enough. I am ardent." He drew nearer her, and made her look in his eyes.

"What is it, Mark? Do take some wine." She poured him a glass and held it out. "I'll drink your health."

He took it slowly. He felt no need of the wine. His artist's sense was steeped in her beauty. "Your loveliness is my wine, Louise."

She looked at him with slightly lifted brows. "It isn't your way to say such things, you know, Mark, and you say them as coolly as if I were done on canvas, instead of being flesh and blood."

He laughed. "Here's to your health, your flesh-and-

blood self, Louise." He lifted his glass on high, and then drained it. "You kissed me as if you were done on canvas."

She too laughed, and the pale roses in her cheeks glowed with a deeper shade. Mark began to analyze his own sensations. What was it that filled his being as he gazed on her? Was it love in his heart, or merely the intoxication of delight in her beauty? Did she fill his soul or his senses?

"I have been thinking a great deal lately, Mark, and —"

"Have you? So have I, and —"

"And a great deal of new light has come to me. I really ought to tell you —"

"Don't — just yet. I am seized with a desire to do the talking myself, and — I'm afraid you are trying to say something I don't wish to hear."

She looked calmly and steadily in his eyes. "Ah, but the truth, Mark, don't you care for the truth — the vast, mysterious, far-reaching, unfathomable truth?"

"No, not for the unfathomable truth, I don't care much for that; but a little everyday, and very fathomable truth I do care extremely about. Louise, I'm ready for that trip to the Orient. When I have finished this piece for Mervain Thompson I'll take you wherever you wish to go — Greece, Arabia, Syria — I will go with you to search for your unfathomable truth, if you desire, in the land of Mahomet, and if you really like their ways better than ours, I will keep you for chief wife, and start a small harem of additional wives over there, as many as you like, only so you keep it within my still not overlarge bank account."

"Hush, Mark. I'm deadly in earnest. I have learned that all material things are but varied manifestations of spirit, and —"

"I know, and you won't eat meat, for fear of eating your great-grandparents, or some one equally dear to you — but in that case is n't it almost as bad to have them killed for your adornment? Who was the dove you had on your hat, and all those white foxes — who were the skins you have on your coat? Come, Louise, drop all this and marry me."

"Mark, you are flippant. Now listen seriously. We can't marry, Mark, not in the material and worldly sense. I can't. I don't believe in marriage. It is a cheap and vulgar concession to mortal and finite modes of existence — a throwing away of the spirit to selfish, material, and purely mundane uses. Think, Mark. The marriage service gives us solely and materially to each other. I would no longer be a spirit, free, unhampered, unbound by all fleshly ties. Whereas now I am part of the infinite soul — then I would be monopolized, owned, and controlled by the finite You."

Mark leaned back and gave a low whistle. She turned her profile toward him, and even in his mystification and perturbation he studied her by line and color. At last he said, "Louise, you're — you're — too fine — too exquisite a being to be turned wholly over to infinity, and be lost to me. We mortals need such beings. Now look at this matter by the sane light of common sense."

"Oh, Mark!" She made a gesture of despair. "You don't understand. You never will."

"Not but what I can. What's the matter with my belonging to infinity, too, and our getting married on that plane?"

"That's just it. If we were both on that plane, we would never need to marry. Our spirits would be forever in com-

munion. The laws which bind the great hordes of human beings, who have not entered into the mysteries, would not bind us. We would be superior to them." She looked at him without seeing him, and spoke with an exalted air of abstraction. "You spoke about Mahomedanism and a harem. Mark, that is all you see in it — the vulgar show of things. The truth that I have entered goes far back of all such modern forms of expression. It is the great central Truth that guides ourselves, like the heavenly bodies, in our orbits, that I seek. The formative, indwelling Truth, that creates and destroys. The sages among the Hindoos and Egyptians understood it, and now in these modern days it is again being revealed to humanity — to those who care to search for it. Mark, souls who understand do not need to marry, they are already married. Two souls who come in the same orbit, understanding all Truth, will belong to each other — will meet inevitably — are in the highest sense married in that preordained soul union, without any intervention of priestcraft or materially directed laws. Man may not intervene here."

Mark rose and walked about the room a moment, then he came back and stood looking down at her. "Very well, Louise," he said quietly. "I take you at your word. Our souls have met and agreed together long ago to be in — ahem — accord — the same orbit, you know; now we'll just understand, both of us, that without the intervention of priestcraft, or any mundane law, we are married, and —"

She awoke suddenly from her trance. "Mark, you know very well we could n't do that."

"You said a moment ago that you were in deadly earnest. What did you mean? If you are, you should be willing to

stand by the legitimate and only result of your cult. I simply take you at your word. We are married, and we go together on a still hunt for Truth. There are places where I can penetrate, where you, being a woman, and therefore unclean and despised among them, cannot. I can search out Truth for you and bring it to you. I think I shall find myself proof against their fundamental doctrine that man is defiled by the touch of woman, so that he has to undergo inconceivable torture as purification from such contact — at least I can as far as you are concerned; and if they take me into their inner mystery of mysteries, I will return and bring you their Truth — which is all you seem to care for now."

"Mark, you are trying to be sarcastic."

"Not at all. I am taking a sane, practical view of your position. We were to be married — if I remember rightly — as soon as I reached a certain point of success, and take a trip to the Orient — a vague term which may mean any point you please east of here, or southeast of Europe. Now I am ready, but you tell me you no longer believe in marriage. Very well, I take you without —"

"But, Mark, you know that is impossible."

"Indeed, no. I am ready to go the whole thing. Many people do, but not for quite such occult reasons — possibly the final result in our case would be about the same, but we are not looking at results — that is — not just now. I am looking at you — and —"

"Mark!" Louise rose majestically. "You know well that your talk is all nonsense and —"

"Not as far as I am concerned. Logical deduction from yours."

"And I will not sit here and listen. Good night."

"Louise." He caught her hand and drew her toward him. "Come into my arms and tell me you love me. We'll call the whole thing nonsense and begin again."

A moment she was swayed by his magnetic will. Her eyes filled with tears, but she held herself away from him. "You master me by force, Mark, and make me lose the calm I should maintain, but I have heard that to-night which makes me know that I must not yield."

"Come," he said impellingly.

"I can't, Mark," she said. "Marriage is for the vulgar who know not the Truth. For those who see light it is sin."

"Damn!" he muttered between his teeth. "Louise, stop that nonsense." He held out his arms to her. "Come — come to me."

"Besides, Mark, you have not yet succeeded — not as I mean you to succeed. You have gained a certain sum of money, enough to take us on our trip, but after that is gone, then what? My artist must be a god among artists. You know I have perfect faith in you, Mark; but you have n't done it. You have it in you to succeed, and until then I would only be a drag on you — with my tastes."

He took one swift stride toward her and caught her to him, then pushed her almost roughly away. "Good night — and good-bye. I shall be gone before you are up in the morning."

"Mark, if you only could understand," she said pleadingly. "Good night."

CHAPTER XIX

RENEWED ASPIRATIONS

That man who trusts himself,
Who, from the wide world's wide
Indifference and boasting, turns aside —
Holds to a worthy purpose with a pride
Born of a strong, fierce aspiration, bold
In his own might and in his spirit's right :
He draws a shaft from God, and in his hold
Gathers the reins that guide men's destinies :
That man hath greatness — on a height
He stands, above the plain, and so much nearer God.

MARK was up and away in the cold winter dawn of the following day, leaving a note to be handed to his aunt at breakfast, begging her forgiveness for his abrupt departure.

He sought out a restaurant, where he hastily swallowed a cup of coffee and devoured a crusty roll, and then repaired to his work in the Mervain Thompson music room. The house was in the hands of the decorators, and the rooms were cold, with a deadly chill, for the janitor had overslept. The workmen were just filing in and were donning their smeared blouses.

Mark was too depressed to trust himself before his own walls. He might do something he would afterwards regret. There were times when, possessed by these morbid thoughts, everything appeared to him worthless and distorted. He had been known to destroy his best work, over which he had labored for weeks, in such a moment. Now as he wan-

dered from room to room, viewing the work going on around him, critically, with drawn and gloomy brow, the contractor approached him.

"Have you seen the library?" he asked. "We are doing it in red and gold. Thompson's idea."

Mark turned and followed him silently into the library, which was nearly finished. "Ah, very good," he said, doubtfully. "What is he going to do with the wall spaces over the shelves?"

"Oh, they'll be filled with pictures, old copper plates and the like, and on the top there will be bric-a-brac, of course — busts and bronzes."

"Yes, yes. Quite the thing." Mark turned and sauntered out, with his hands in his coat pockets, from which still protruded his bundle of rag-enwrapped paint brushes.

"That's a fine piece of work you have done in the music room," the contractor called after him.

"Thank you. Can't say — I have n't seen it this morning."

"Must have had a bad night," said the contractor, laughingly, to one of the painters.

"Like as not. He was still in there when we left — too dark to see — may have been there all night, for all we know."

However, the kindly word of the contractor helped to break the spell of bitterness that submerged him, and he returned to his work in a fairly reasonable frame of mind. He climbed the scaffolding and seated himself before the figure of Elizabeth awaiting the return of the pilgrims. There he sat on the rough plank, gazing at his walls and kicking his heels together; gazing, but not seeing. Instead of the brown-coated pilgrims, their faces lighted by the torch

glare, winding in solemn procession, in the mirk of evening, down the rough mountain road, he saw a somber stretch of woods curving to the sea; and instead of a rugged castle towering dark against an evening sky, he saw a yellow cottage with green blinds, nestled under giant silver-leaf poplars and swaying locust trees that stood out dark in a golden light. And instead of Elizabeth standing luminously white, shading her taper and waiting with great expectant eyes, he saw a small maid enveloped in iridescent, mistlike draperies, with a wonderful mass of shining hair tossed by the wind.

"Hello! Come down from that scaffolding before you touch my walls again," shouted a jovial voice below him. It was Mervain Thompson himself, a genial, small man with a large head.

Mark swung himself over and, hanging by his hands, dropped to the floor below. The sad lines were chased from his face by his characteristic smile as he shook the proprietor's hand. "You like it?" he asked.

"I like it so well that I am going to have that scaffolding down before you have a chance to spoil it. I know you. You are one of the kind that are never satisfied. You don't know your best work. You get a thing right, and then you keep tinkering at it until you ruin it. Stevens was telling me —"

"Yes, I know — said I spoiled one of his panels."

"Oh, not spoiled exactly — said you came near doing so, fooling with it."

"Ah, yes. He cautioned you about this, no doubt." Mark laughed immoderately.

"Have you seen my library?"

"I looked in there just now."

"Do you like it?"

"Yes, yes. Very well."

"I want one room in the house purely typical. I want only American art, but I want it art, you understand, that will be recognized as such by those who know the best. I don't care for a renaissance treatment — it may be classic — but — have n't we in America an art of our own?"

"Hardly — yet. True art is an intrinsic thing. It has no nationality, any more than truth has. Art should stand alone — and yet — it is a hobby of mine that we should copy less, ape foreign conceptions less, and develop here an art as purely true as the world knows. We have done so in literature — why may we not in painting and building?"

The two men paced in silence for a few moments, and Thompson led the way back to the red and gold library.

"What shall I do with these walls?"

"What do you wish to do with them? You should have some spaces left for various works of art."

"That falls in with my thought, and still, I would like to have something quite our own here. I want you to make me a painting — a large one, filling this whole space — not merely a wall decoration, you understand. Take any subject you please, only let it belong to us."

Mark's face radiated its pleasure. "I see. If you give me this to do, it will be the realization of one of the aspirations of my life. It will make definite that which has been heretofore only a dream of mine, that I may help, may possibly even have a leading part in bringing about a chiliar of art here in America."

Mervain Thompson stood with feet planted a little apart, looking up in Mark's face. "A what?" he said, lifting his brows.

"The Greeks had theirs, the Romans theirs—I love broad fields to work in. The very barrenness and immensity of America is inspiring. Ours is yet to come—it is coming. May it last forever!"

"My notion of your chiliad business is very vague, but go ahead. What I want is an artistic effect here."

Mark looked slowly about the room. "A gathering of the perfections of all periods—a millennium of art in America. We have here the gathering together of all peoples on earth. Each element has a right to the best of its own art. This is what America means to me as an art field, to develop in our midst, from the best of past ages and dying nations, a new, a grand renaissance. Oh, stupendous! To incorporate our own conceptions—to create—to bring the best, the purest art rays of all the world, of all time, here to a focus in a brilliant, pure, white light of absolute, creative art. Majestic! so that it will rise to the height of being a little lower than the works of the Almighty, even as man was 'created a little lower than the angels.'"

Mervain Thompson walked about a moment, then stood with his back to Mark, looking down the street. "Very well," he said at last, "to come down to the practical question of the moment—what will you do to begin with?"

"I will begin with the supreme moment of a human soul. I will paint the trial scene in the 'Scarlet Letter.'"

"That's good—American, too."

"Purely, typically so."

Thompson held out his hand. "Settled," he said. "Take your own time to it, but, you understand, strike while your conception is hot."

"Indeed, yes, yes. You are undoubtedly right." Mark walked slowly about the room, feeling of the bundle of brushes in his pocket. He was already making out his color scheme. "Good-bye," he said, at last, and abruptly walked out of the house and down the street, without going again to his beloved music room.

That room closed a period of his past. He had hoped to win Louise with it. Now it was done and she had never seen it — she who had inspired it. Hereafter he would create for humanity. One hope was gone — he would rise to another. Yet he moved heavily and sadly. Without the love of a woman to strengthen his soul, where was he? And still, had he ever had that love — that supreme love, or had he only dreamed he had it and been satisfied with his dream? Perhaps — sometime, the real thing might come to him, and then — then he would be ready. How he would create for the sake of a pure art in his own country — for the sake of a glorious conception. He would lock forever the door of that empty chamber of his heart, and work, work and forget that his hope had ever been.

He entered a book shop and purchased a small copy of "The Scarlet Letter," and then betook himself to the inner room of a quiet little restaurant, and ordered wine and beef-steak. It was already noon, and he was suffering the exhaustion engendered by excess of emotion and the lack of food; for the day before he had painted in delighted anticipation, forgetting to eat, and since then he had neither slept nor eaten enough to keep a normal balance between body and spirit. Now he put the past resolutely away. He filled his pipe, and leaning back against the wall behind him, began reading his book.

CHAPTER XX

JOYFUL FINDS A PROTECTOR

"Over the ball of it,
Peering and prying,
How I see all of it,
Life there, out lying!
Roughness and smoothness,
Shine and defilement,
Grace and uncouthness,
One reconciliation."

—ROBERT BROWNING, *Pisgah Sights*.

It was three in the afternoon. Marie Vaile, clad in a rose and white negligée was sipping coffee and listening to Joyful's guitar. Her face was pale, and her eyes were heavy and sad, but unnaturally lustrous. When Joyful entered her room that morning she found her still dressed as she had been the evening before, lying across her bed with face red and swollen, breathing heavily.

Joyful thought her very ill, perhaps dying, and filled with fear and awe, she bent over her and touched her hair with trembling fingers, and kissed her fevered cheek, trying to arouse her. She hoped to avoid calling Madame La Grande, dreading the sight of her impassive face.

"Oh, what can I do, what can I do!" she cried, seating herself on the side of the bed, and wringing her hands. "Marie, beautiful Marie, look at me, speak to me! Are you ill?"

She moved about the room with limbs that ached and trembled from the horror that filled her. Mechanically she took note of everything. A cupboard stood half open, and she looked in on what appeared to be a miniature pharmacy, so filled was it with lotions and phials. She picked up the check Scott Stevens had laid on the table the evening before, and took cognizance of his signature, without realizing what she was doing. In her frightened and unnaturally acute consciousness everything in the room, to the smallest detail, seemed to burn itself into her brain as if branded there with irons.

She returned to the bed and knelt sobbing at the side, taking Marie's heavy head on her bosom and stroking her face and neck with gentle touch. "Oh, Marie, what is it? Look at me, Marie — open your eyes, beautiful Marie!"

And Marie awoke. Slowly the heavy eyelids lifted, but she lay still, and Joyful continued her tender caressing touch, begging her to tell her what she could do for her. There was a rap at the door, and as no response was made, Madame La Grande opened it and thrust her head in, then entered and stood a moment in silent stoicism, looking down on them.

Joyful raised imploring, tearful eyes to her face, but said nothing, and the woman looked about the disordered room. Then she shut the cupboard, and turned the key in the lock.

"You need n't trouble yourself about her," she said quietly. "She's had too much. She'll come around soon. She's always doing it lately, and she's losing her good looks very rapidly. She'll have nothing to live on then, if she does n't look out."

Her eyes roved constantly about the room as if taking an

inventory of its contents. Suddenly they seemed to grow smaller, gleaming like points of light. They had rested on the bank check. She turned her back on it, however, and looked again at Marie, who had raised her head and was gazing at her.

"Are you feeling better? I'll send you up some coffee." The woman spoke in a low voice, and took a step nearer the bed, when Marie suddenly flung out her arms to ward her off.

"Go back, go back," she shrieked. "Go back to your own vermin. You have n't got your hands on me yet, you she-devil." She struggled to her feet and, tottering forward, struck violently at the woman, screaming imprecations like one possessed of a demon. "Curse you! You have n't got your hands on me yet. You think you'll save my face to fill your purse? Curse you to hell!"

Joyful shrank back, cowering in a corner, and the woman went softly out, shutting the door upon the two. She had seen the bank check, and that it was for five figures, not for three, nor four; also she had seen the signature. "Little fool," she muttered, as she walked away.

Marie threw herself again on the bed and lay there prone, clutching the pillows, shaking and sobbing, and hiding her face. Then Joyful drew near and knelt as before, and held her head on her breast. Marie tried to push her away, but her strength was gone. Joyful felt suddenly — as she saw the other's weakness — her own heart grow strong within her. She soothed and petted Marie as if she were a child, and held her close in her arms.

"Don't, don't, Marie. I love you. What is it? What have you done?"

"You mustn't touch me, child. I can't let you touch me—" yet she clung to Joyful even as she spoke. "I am hideous! horrible! You must go away from here and leave me to die. I must die—I will not let her get her talons on me. I will die," she cried, shivering, moaning, and weeping.

"No, you are not to die. I am here with you, Marie."

The girl started up and pushed Joyful from her. She went to the cupboard and poured herself something in a tiny glass and drank it off; then she sat in the large chair and leaning back, closed her eyes. "I seem to smell tuberoses," she said.

Joyful looked about. "There are none here," she said.

"Yes, but there was one here last evening. It is that I remember."

Joyful thought her mind wandering. Presently she opened her eyes and gazed at Joyful. She had grown suddenly sane and quiet. "Yes, you are here, as you said, poor little thing. That is the pity of it. I can't die yet—I must get you away from here first, or else—Come here, little pink, wild rose, sit by me. Snuggle up, so."

"Or else what, Marie?"

The slender, beautiful arms closed around the girl as they had the evening before, and Joyful felt abashed at their touch. "Or else I must kill you first and then die."

"Marie, Marie, don't talk like that. It is terrible—even if you don't mean it."

"Child, I do. When you came in last night, it seemed as if I could devour you, I was so glad just to touch you. I knew what you were—I knew, darling—now, listen. I would rather hold you in my arms dead, than see you in

that woman's power; and I swear to you — I swear to God, I will, if I can't get you away."

"But why need you say such things? I can go away, if I ought not to stay here. You have n't told me yet what the matter is with this place, and everything seems very grand."

But to this remark Marie gave no heed. She was staring straight before her, planning, scheming.

Joyful rose and touched the bell as she had seen Marie do the evening before. "I have rung for that boy in the green suit to come and bring your breakfast. You have n't eaten anything, and neither have I. When you have eaten, you will feel better and won't talk about dying. Why can't we go away together? I have a little money, and I can soon find something to do. I found this place right away." She rose and entered her own room as she spoke, and Marie looked after her with a bitter smile.

"Certainly," she said, under her breath, "this is a place that is open to a woman when nothing else is." Then she bathed her face, and Joyful helped her don the beautiful rose-colored gown, heavy with lace, and let down her rich, shining hair and brushed it. When breakfast was brought them Marie ate little, but took her coffee, and the day slipped away. Languid and pale, she lay back among her pillows, while Joyful read to her from a volume of Browning's poems, richly bound in red and gold, which she found on Marie's table. A maid came and set the room to rights, and Marie sent for wine, but drank of it sparingly. She said her head ached still, and she must have it. Joyful watched her sadly.

"I wish I could do something to make you happy,

Marie," she said, at last. "Would you like me to bring my guitar and sing to you?"

"Oh, yes. Sing, sing! I did n't know you could sing. To-morrow I shall be better, and we will go somewhere together, you and I; we will be happy somewhere, but Madame La Grande must get no hint of it." She took the bank check and put it carefully away. "I was going to destroy this, but now, for your sake I will not. My sin may save you, little pink rose."

Joyful went away, wondering at the things she said, and returned with her guitar, in its quaint old case. Then she sang for Marie the beautiful songs of Schubert Elizabeth had taught her. Thus they were sitting, when a card was brought to Marie. She looked at it closely, turning it over and over. "New York!" she murmured. "Who can it be?" while Joyful sang on, and some one standing waiting in the hall below heard the voice faintly and, closing his eyes a moment, saw with inner vision green woods and a cottage and blue sea beyond.

Marie thrust the card in her dress. "I must go down," she said. "Quick; help me to get into something else." Then Joyful helped her, and Marie, quite restored and beautiful to look upon, left her. "Turn the key in the lock and stay here until I return, dear child. If she comes, don't let her in, and don't even speak. I'll be back immediately."

Wondering, and feeling as if she were imprisoned, Joyful obeyed her. She sat for a while pondering, with her head bowed in her hands. Where was she? Why must she keep silent? Ah! there was something quite wrong here, lovely as everything seemed to be. She would go away and find some other place to teach. She heard a knocking at

the door of her own room. That must be Madame La Grande. Her heart stood still. Should she go in there and open the door? Should she obey Marie, or not? Only a moment she hesitated, then she locked the door between the two rooms, and remained where she was, silent and pale. But why should she fear? she asked herself. What had she done that was wrong, or Madame La Grande, either? Surely the woman had been kind. Then Joyful heard her enter the room and move softly about, but she did not stir. She felt a tremor of intense dislike creep over her, and sank down in the great chair, as if she would hide herself; yet she was ashamed of her fear.

Then the woman went away, and Joyful heard her low voice presently in conversation with Marie. With a sigh of relief she returned to the copy of Browning, and was soon lost in the poem of "Saul," oblivious of the fact that in the hall outside the door her fate was being fought for and decided.

"I tell you it is impossible. You are very clever, but you can never change her; you can only kill her."

"Hush," said Madame, "she will hear you. You need not be so excited. She must live, and I give her the chance. Let me in. You have no right to her."

Suddenly Marie became outwardly more calm. Her eyes blazed, but she laughed and lifted her shoulders. "Very well, I must live too, and you would better believe me; I know I can do in this case what you cannot. Listen. To-morrow I will take her out and buy her lovely things — I have the check here, you need n't be afraid — and I will make her eyes shine — you will see. I will have her completely under my control in two weeks, and until I do you

will be able to do nothing with her. I know the type better than you do."

Madame's eyes drew together in two dark points. "I have use for her and you have not. Let me pass."

"Have n't I a use for her? You will see. I'll make a bargain with you. In two weeks' time I agree to cure her of all whims and turn her over to you an ideal little devil. If I can't do this, I will put a check for one thousand dollars in your hands. If I can do it, you must give me that amount. I need the money and I can earn it, but you — you could no more deal with her than you could get into heaven. She's afraid of you now. I can see it."

"You put your price too high. We'll say half that amount for my part; for yours, let it stand, a check for a thousand, if you fail me. I have the first right. I found her." She turned away.

"Wait," cried Marie. "You must not speak to her, nor have anything to do with her, nor allow any one else to meddle with her during that time. Remember, you forfeit the whole, if you interfere. Is it a bargain?"

"Have it your own way."

"I say, is it a bargain?"

"Yes, but there is to be no play about it."

"Then don't let me see you in this upper hall near my door again — or —" Marie stepped forward and hissed something in Madame La Grande's ear, and the woman turned away.

"I know what I'm talking about. Nan told me enough to put me on your track. You want this one to fill that girl's place, and —" But Madame La Grande continued her quiet way without a backward glance, and Marie stood

alone, gazing after her with flashing eyes. A smile of contempt disfigured her beautiful face. "Yes, you'll have her, will you?" she whispered, and flew back to her own apartment. "Let me in, let me in, little pink rose; it is Marie." And Joyful awoke from her dream of the beautiful young David and the crazed old king, and unlocked the door with shaking fingers.

"You are trembling, little one," said Marie, tenderly. She caught her and whirled her about the room joyously. "Something is going to happen, something good. Listen." She wrapped her arms about her and whispered in her ear. "We are going away from here to live together in some sweet, quiet place. We are going to be happy together. Hush, don't speak. We must say nothing — nothing, dear, or she will hear of it and devise some way of keeping us. I know her, you see, sweetest. Sit down here and I'll tell you all about it. She never meant you to teach French here at all. She sees that you can be made very beautiful, child — and — she — wants you for an attraction."

"An attraction for what?" Joyful raised her head and looked searchingly in Marie's eyes, and Marie turned her head away.

"Never mind now, little pink rose. Just trust me, will you? Some day I can explain to you all about it, but now we haven't time. There are things to be done, and they must be done immediately. You must quietly pack all your clothing. Don't let any one enter your room. We'll cram the keyhole full of paper so she can't get in with her pass key, and we will go out through my suite. Then to-morrow, to-morrow, dear. I told her I would take you out and buy you beautiful clothes and jewels to make you

lovely for—for her—to— But I lied to her. We will do no such thing. I lied. She was to have paid me for doing this thing for her, but I lied to her bravely. Yes, I did, I did!" Marie was growing rapidly more excited, and Joyful touched her cheek with gentle, caressing hand.

"Don't, Marie, don't! It breaks my heart, Marie. Something makes me feel that there is some horrible thing the matter here, some horrible thing. Oh, Marie, Marie!" She broke down in a passion of weeping and slid to her knees as she used to kneel at her mother's side. "Marie, let us pray to God about it."

Marie put her hand to her throat as if she were choking. She grew suddenly cold, and shivered as with an ague. "I can't, I can't," she cried. "There is no God to hear me. Get up quick. We must work. There, there, stop crying, sweet, stop. Everything will come right; I will take care of you. I have only sold my beauty this time, not my soul.—My God! I sold that long ago."

Joyful rose and drew herself to her full height, horrified at Marie's words, and amazed at her incoherence. "Why do you say there is no God to hear you, and then cry out 'My God'? What do you mean by 'selling your beauty'?" she said, with quivering lips, and turned to go into her own room.

"Don't leave me. Come back to me, child. There, it is nothing but wild talk. You may pray all you wish, in your own room, dear, not here. There is n't any God, anyway, or if there is He won't listen to you here. No, wait, wait! I don't know what I am saying I am so wild to get away, and—the thoughts you bring to me make me crazy, but it will pass. See, child, I am myself now." She took

Joyful again tenderly in her arms and dried her tears with her own handkerchief. "Listen. We will talk quietly together and plan. I will put everything I have in my trunks and lock them to-day, and you must do the same. Then to-morrow we will go out together, and never come back, never, never. I will begin a sweet new life with you. I have something I can do now; some one is coming to see me about it this evening; I made the arrangement just now when I was called downstairs. You must do just as I tell you. Don't be afraid, little one, because I talked so wildly. I have hated so long, and I can love so hard, that between the two I am torn in pieces. We'll leave the hatred behind, and if I have you I can take the love with me, can't I?"

"Yes, Marie, yes. I can love hard, too."

Then Joyful went to her own room, and Marie stood before her mirror and examined her face and figure carefully. "Yes, I am still beautiful," she murmured. "I will serve his purpose, and this time — Ah, there is no buoyancy of love to lead me on this time, but — I sell only my beauty, not my soul." Then she threw up her arms and sank to the floor, a cowering heap, crushed by the memories that surged in her heart. "God, God! She wanted me to pray! She wanted me to pray — me!"

When she arose, exhausted with emotion, she went to her cupboard and her beautiful, slender fingers trembled on the fastening. She turned away and paced the room, but her knees failed her, and she went back and opened the door.

"I will take only enough to keep me up for this work," she said. "I can't trust the maid; I must do it alone."

CHAPTER XXI

A MODERN KNIGHT

"I was caught
So suddenly, that I ne'er took
Counsel of aught but of her look,
And of my heart : for her kind eyes
So gladly on my heart did rise,
That instantly my inmost thought
Said it were better serve her for nought
Than with another to be well."

—CHAUCER.

FOR two hours Joyful worked busily in her own room. She heard Marie moving about, and hurried her own simple preparations that she might assist her, but the sounds gradually ceased, and when at last she knocked at Marie's door there was no response. She waited until long past the dinner hour, and as still no answer came to her gentle knocking, she pushed the door open, and then uttered a low cry of dismay. The bed was heaped with beautiful gowns, tables and stands were covered with gloves and fancy articles and jewels, a large trunk stood open, partly filled, and about it on the floor were strewn slippers and boxes, shoes and laces, and in the midst of the débris, stretched on the floor, lay Marie in the same heavy stupor in which Joyful had found her in the morning. The air of the place was close, and reeked with the fumes of liquor.

Unknown as such sights were to Joyful in her heretofore

idyllic existence, she recognized now that the creature lying at her feet was a drunken woman. Indeed, she had never realized before that a woman could be drunken, and her whole being quivered with horror; yet, overriding her horror and, in a measure, calming her spirit, was a mastering emotion of pity. A large and womanly grace entered into her child's soul. She was never a child again.

She looked about for something to do. On a table near the door stood the dinner long since served for two, now cold and unappetizing. She remembered how Madame that morning had offered to send up coffee for Marie, so now she poured a cup strong and black, and kneeling, tried to rouse her to drink it, putting her arm gently under the inert head which rolled from side to side. She could do nothing. Then she sat beside her on the floor and wept, and again, with tears dropping on Marie's face, tried to make her take the coffee.

At last she rose, and with set lips endeavored to bring order out of the chaos around her, but the task seemed hopeless. She felt faint and hungry, and ate a little of the cold food and drank some of the coffee. Then she heard a knocking at the door of her own room, and it seemed as if the beating of her heart was as loud as the knocking. She paused not a moment, but flew from Marie's apartment and turned the key in the lock and hid it, before answering the summons. Marie must be shielded from prying eyes.

Then she opened the door and Madame La Grande entered. Her arms were full of clothing which she laid out on the bed. She spoke quietly, as always, and very kindly; yet Joyful, to her own surprise, did not feel her heart any the more drawn toward her.

"How are you feeling?" she asked. "Rested since yesterday?"

"I am rested, but I don't feel very well to-night."

"Ah, yes. It's been a trying day for you, of course. I thought you would soon have enough of her. Jim told me she was rolling drunk again when he brought up your dinners. You're not used to such things, are you?"

"I have seen a man drunk, but never a woman before."

"No doubt." The woman took a chair unbidden, and motioned Joyful to another. "Since you are rested, we will have a little talk about your position. I am not ready for you to begin the lessons yet; you can help me in other ways for a while. I have brought you some gowns more suitable for your position than those you have. There is a great deal of dress here. We will just try on one of these."

"Oh, but I can't afford to buy such dresses as those," cried Joyful in alarm, as Madame lifted an elaborate, pale yellow brocade from the bed.

"Come," she said impellingly. "You need not buy them all at once; you can have all the time you wish. These are a great bargain; you can have them for half their value."

"But I don't wish them for half their value; that wouldn't be right."

Madame La Grande turned Joyful about as she talked, rapidly removing her clothing, and, quite unheeding the girl's quivering remonstrance, soon had her entirely re-clothed, leaving on her no single article she had been wearing. Even on her feet she fitted pale yellow silk stockings and high-heeled slippers. The maidenly Joyful stood before her at last, transformed, flushed, shrinking and ashamed.

"There!" said Madame La Grande, leading her to the

long mirror. "Now look at yourself. See what a lady you are."

But Joyful lifted her head and looked searchingly in the woman's eyes. "I do not want these clothes. They are not suitable for me. I will not go uncovered here." Her bosom heaved and her beautiful throat throbbed.

"Well, you can wear these lovely pearls about your neck, but your skin is more beautiful than they. Come."

Still Joyful stood and looked into her eyes without moving or flinching.

"Marie told me your name is Antoinette, and the name belongs to you in this dress, absolutely. Come, we will go down."

But Joyful neither moved nor spoke. Then the woman turned on her sternly. "I need your assistance this evening. If you are ever to be of any use to me in this school you must yield to my judgment. You might have looked a long time before you had found any one to take you in as I have, with no recommendations or references, not even a letter of introduction."

"Why did you do it?"

"Because, as I told you, I needed you. One of my assistants died last week, and I was left in sad straits. If you have any worth or gratitude in you, you will do whatever I set you. I don't want any foolishness. What I wish of you this evening is very simple. Every one is gone out, and there is no one to receive guests, and I am very tired and must have some rest. I wish you to remain in the parlor and be affable to any one who may happen to call, and so take my place for the evening. You never could do it in those old duds I have taken off from you. This is a very

elegant institution, and you must fit the place. You need n't be afraid. Just put on a pleasant face, and pretty, courteous manners, and you will get on all right."

But Joyful was silent and immovable. Then Madame La Grande tried a different argument. "You may be sure, dear child, that I would not ask you to do anything you ought not. I have planned and contrived for you. I have even remodeled this lovely dress for you with my own hands, so you could appear a little more as a lady should in my parlor, and now you requite me by staring at me in distrust. This is the doing of that shameless girl. She has no gratitude in her. Here I am almost dead with fatigue and care, and unless you will pleasantly take the responsibility of guests and their reception to-night off my hands, I must go still longer without my rest. I am not going to ask this of you after the lessons in French begin. It is only for an evening or two, and at any rate, no one may be in."

Then Joyful turned slowly toward the small mirror and gazed at herself. She could not believe in her own identity, as Madame gently took her by the hand and led her away down the magnificent stairway, and into the beautifully decorated and furnished parlors. There she left her alone, a waif tossed up by the tide-wash of a cruel ocean.

Joyful stood breathless, waiting to hear the last of the swish and swirl of the woman's silken draperies as she swept up the stairway; then she drew a long breath, as if freed from a baleful presence, and looked about her. Everywhere she saw herself reflected in great mirrors let in the wall, or framed in gold, so that at first she felt as if surrounded by other young girls like herself, until at last she became abashed at

the many reflections of herself and tried to avoid seeing them.

Quite filling one end of the vast parlor was a large painting representing life-size nude women bathing by the sea. Their delicate, pink bodies stood out in strong relief against a deep blue ocean with green curling waves. Astounded and spellbound, Joyful walked slowly forward and stood, a small, slight figure, pathetically lonely, fascinated before it.

Presently the heavy red curtains of the doorway behind her were pushed aside, and Mark Thorn entered and walked toward her. His footsteps, muffled by the rich rugs, she did not hear, and he stood quietly waiting. A moment they remained thus, then becoming intuitively aware of the presence of another near her, she turned and looked in his face. He started back, stunned for the instant by what seemed a miraculous resemblance to the girl of his last summer's idyl, but she, forgetful of her dress and surroundings, everything except that she was at last looking in the face of a friend, swept toward him with swift, eager grace, both hands extended, her face glorified by joyous emotion. He took the two hands in his, filled with dismay and anxiety, for he had had time to catch the sad, frightened look in her eyes in the first moment of discovery.

"Joyful — Joyful Heatherby! Is this you? How came you here?"

"Oh, I don't know — a woman brought me here. I don't know where I am — I don't even know if I am I. I prayed for you to come — for some one to come." Then, in another moment he had her folded in his arms and she was weeping on his breast. Scarcely conscious of what he was doing, he held her, wiping away her tears and kissing her face.

As Joyful regained control of herself she remembered her unusual dress and naked shoulders and arms, and shrank away from him. She caught a scarf of flimsy drapery from an onyx stand and drew it about her neck and across her breast, covering herself as best she could. Then, brokenly, the story was told.

"How long have you been in this place, Joyful?" Mark asked with grave solicitude. Once before he had seen her weep and had longed to comfort her even as now, but then he had not dared to touch her.

"I only came yesterday. Madame La Grande brought me. She said I might teach French in her school — but the time seems much, much longer, and —"

"And you have been unhappy here?"

"Everything seems strange. It seems not right some way. I don't know what is the matter, but I have a wrong feeling; and I have seen no one to teach yet — and Marie Vaile, a very beautiful young lady who has apartments here, says Madame La Grande does not mean to have me teach at all, and she hates her. She has been very kind to me and has tried to make me happy, and has kept me with her and would not let Madame in — and yet — Madame has been good to me, too, but in a different way — I can't understand about it, nor what is before me, for it is all so strange."

"And how came you in this costume?" Her cheeks flamed crimson, she who had never been abashed in his presence before. He shrank from the brutality imposed on him by the necessity of questioning her.

"Madame La Grande put it on me just now. She said I was to receive her guests for her this evening, as she was

too tired and needed me, and so — she brought me down here and left me, and — I was going up to put on my own dress as soon as I thought she was really gone, and while I was waiting, you came. I would n't have been so frightened if I had known you were to be the first guest." She smiled through her tears, looking up in his face, the old April smile he had seen before and loved.

"Thank God for that," he said. "Go now, Joyful, change your costume as rapidly as you can, and dress warmly. I am going to take you away. Go. Don't hesitate. We will find you a much pleasanter school in which to teach."

"But I promised to go away with Miss Vaile to-morrow."

"No. Not even until to-morrow can I let you stay. I give you fifteen minutes in which to dress for the street, and then you must put your things together as rapidly as possible. I will take them for you."

"Oh, Mr. Thorn! I can't leave her. She will die, if I do."

"She was here before you came, was she not? Yes. Then I think she can live after you are gone. Trust me, Miss Joyful; this is not the school for you. If you are troubled about her, I will look after her. I came here to see her, at any rate, this evening, and I can come again."

Then Joyful left him and hurried away in the trailing satin gown. Mark marveled at her beauty and grace. He had not dreamed the child could look so mature and womanly, and yet she had known sorrow in the few months since he had last seen her. He feared to let her out of his sight lest he lose her, but dared not speak to call her back lest he arouse the suspicion of some attendant. In haste he

followed after, leaping up the stairs, and saw her vanish in her own room. Then he sat down there to watch and wait for her within sight of her door.

He wondered at the emptiness and stillness of the place, but it was as Madame had said, every one had gone out upon the streets or to the theaters, and only Joyful and poor drunken Marie remained on that floor. As he sat there, the boy passed him carrying the tray of food, and asked if there was anything he wanted; but Mark assumed an air of familiarity with the place and gave him money, saying he could look after his own wants, and the boy did not return.

As he sat thus waiting on the stairs, Mark's heart raged within him. He cursed his fellow men with a sense of hatred toward them, and felt that, if it were necessary in order to take Joyful away from there, he could commit murder. Ere the fifteen minutes were gone, she reappeared, dressed as she had been when she arrived. Mark laid his finger on his lips and met her at the door.

"Let me in a moment," he said. "Where are your things? In that little trunk? I can carry them easily. You spoke of Marie Vaile. Where is she? I wish to speak to her."

"Oh, you can't," cried Joyful, with a frightened glance toward Marie's door. She had found time to go in and place a pillow under the poor inert head, and had forgotten to turn the key and secrete it as before. Mark suspected some unhappy revelation, yet in his anger he determined to see Marie, if possible, and get some further explanation of Joyful's experiences. Receiving no response to his imperative rap, he pushed the door open and entered, and

then stood still, aghast more at the realization of what Joyful had suffered than at Marie's condition.

"She was packing her things," said Joyful, sadly.

"Yes, I see."

"We were to leave together to-morrow. It will break her heart for me to go without her. She was so good to me! Oh, Marie, Marie! Speak to me!" She knelt at her side, and again her tears fell on Marie's face. "Marie, open your eyes. Let me explain to you."

Mark took her by the hand gently. "Come. We cannot wait here. She will know it is better for you when she gets over this." His heart overflowed with tenderness toward Joyful. He loathed to see her touch the drunken creature, from whom he turned away his eyes in disgust, and his manner was almost rough as he led Joyful away. He could not help seeing her as he had seen her first, fair and fresh as a rose with the dew on it, and as unconscious of evil. Now he was seized with a frenzy of haste lest they be interrupted on their way out. He lifted the small trunk to his shoulder. "Follow me quickly," he said.

At the outer door they were intercepted by the boy, who advanced swaggeringly and demanded to know of Mark what he was doing.

"Open the door," said Mark. And when the boy refused, he took him suddenly by the collar and twisted him about with one hand and tossed him sprawling on the floor behind them. Joyful sprang forward to undo the fastening of the door herself. She did not understand the complicated arrangement of locks and bolts, and Mark was still further delayed, but he managed to drag Joyful out in the cold winter air before the boy had aroused the guardians of the place.

"We are free," said Mark, drawing in his breath sharply. "Walk with me quickly, please, only a block or two. I will hail a cab and then we are off."

And now, for the first time, Mark realized that he did not know where to take Joyful. That there were places where she might be safely lodged for a time, until she could find employment, he knew; but he quickly discarded all thought of these. He did not wish to have her affairs too closely questioned, nor to place her under any kind of vicarious or public surveillance, nor would he take her to his aunt. A chill, cutting wind was blowing, and Joyful shivered under her great cloak, but she was not thinking of the cold, as she walked at his side weeping silently.

They quickly arrived at a corner where cabs could be found, and Mark hailed one and they rode away together. Not being able to think of a better place at the moment, he directed the driver to his old studio rooms. He knew that, tucked away in a small corner of the building, lived the janitor and his wife, who was a voluble, shrewish English woman, yet kind-hearted in her way. If they would take care of Joyful for a short while, he could think better what to do. Perhaps he could learn where the Drews were and send her to them.

During the short half hour of their drive he was filled with varying and tumultuous emotions. It seemed as if every moment he had spent in Joyful's presence since first he looked on her passed in review before him, and his heart throbbed in rebellious anger at her loneliness and peril. He vowed to himself that she should henceforth be his care. He would love her and shield her. He would wait until she was happy again, and then he would woo her into a

greater joy — and while he thought and brooded, she sat silently beside him weeping. Yet he would not let himself touch her again to draw her to him and speak out of the longing of his heart. He could not do so sanely, at this moment.

"Why do you cry, Joyful?" he asked at last. "You must not. You are safe now, and I am going to see to it that you are happy all the rest of your life. Why do you cry?"

"Oh, I can't stop! I am not thinking of myself. It is because she is lying there so. I did n't mean you to see her."

"Joyful, don't think of her," he said sternly.

"She was sweet and dear to me, Mr. Thorn, and so very beautiful and so sad, part of the time. She must have had some great and terrible sorrow, but she did not say so; yet I think she hates to remember something — and so — she does that. I'm so sorry you saw her."

"Why are you, dear one?" He murmured the last two words in a whisper, but she heard them and lifted her tearful glance to his face with the old questioning look he knew so well.

"Because she ought not to be detested. I ought to have stayed with her — I —"

"I will not detest her, then, if you don't like it. Stop crying. You will be ill." He feared himself and assumed a sternness he could not feel, and she lifted her head and gazed out in the darkness, trying bravely to regain her self-control.

"I wish she were here with us," she said at last. "I am afraid for her — of something — I don't know what —"

"If this will lighten your dear heart, I will find out what

becomes of her, and let you know. You see, I am always going to take care of you after this, Joyful, and we won't have any more tears or sadness, will we?" He took her hand. She very gently drew it away, but stopped weeping.

"You are most kind and good to me, but — you know — I can take care of myself without being a burden to any one, as soon as I find the right place."

"Listen, Joyful. Was I not a burden to you once?"

"No, never, Mr. Thorn. Grandmother was so happy to have you there, and so was grand-daddy. And I — I loved to be with you and hear you talk."

"And what if I also love to be with you and hear you talk, would you deny me that privilege?"

"No — but I can take care of myself, Mr. Thorn."

"I know you can, Miss Joyful. You are a brave little woman, as well as a wise one. Now, when we get where I am taking you, I will ask them to give you board and lodging for a week or two, and that will give us time to find the right kind of a place for you, as you said; and in the meantime I would n't talk to the woman very much about — your — affairs. I know the man very well, and he is a good sort; but his wife — I have only seen her — I fear she is something of a scold. She may be a little aggressive. Don't let her annoy you. Just keep your own counsel and wait until I come to you again. It may be a week, or more, but you can be patient until I do, can't you?"

"Yes, if you think best — and — Marie —"

"I will find out about her. Don't worry." So he comforted Joyful, and when the cab stopped, her tears were dried, and she was beginning to think hopefully of the future.

The janitor and his wife had not yet retired. The woman appeared to have just come in, for she still wore her bonnet. Having no children, she found time for other interests than those involving her own and her husband's affairs. Mark merely stated that he wished to find a safe and pleasant place for a little friend of his from the country, until she could find a satisfactory situation. The pair were surprised, and the wife was reserved, but Mark had soon won his way with the man, and they were shown into the tidy little apartment of four rooms, one of which, exceedingly small, but white-curtained and neat, was given to Joyful.

There Mark left her seated on her little trunk, bravely trying to keep back the tears which would start afresh when the door closed after him. He had promised he would find her anything she wished to do, and would return in a week, perhaps sooner, and his heart ached and beat madly when he turned away.

Then he talked further with the janitor's wife, who had a chronic suspicion of all men, more especially of artists, whose vocation she did not appreciate, and of men her husband liked. After making a strict bargain with her, Mark paid board for two weeks in advance and took his departure.

CHAPTER XXII

MRS. BINGS' BLUNDERS

"So, she'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.
Just at twelve o'clock
I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar —
I shall pull her through the door —
I shall have her for evermore !"

— ROBERT BROWNING.

MARK THORN'S affairs necessitated his arrival in New York immediately, and in order the sooner to return to his charge, he took a night train out of Boston within the hour, but with all his impatience he was detained even longer than he feared he might be. In his desire to please Joyful by bringing her some news of Marie, he wrote to that young woman asking an interview, without, however, making mention of Joyful. As he received no reply, he went, on his return to Boston, to the address given him by Scott Stevens as before, but learned that she was no longer there.

He then demanded an interview with Madame La Grande, but from that astute individual no further information could be gained than that "Miss Vaile had been ill, and then had departed, leaving no address. Her apartments were to let on most reasonable terms, and if Mr. Thorn knew of any young woman who wished a desirable home where she would be well cared for and chaperoned, would he be kind

enough to recommend them? She would be pleased to show him the suite which was 'supplied with every convenience, modern and hygienic.' " Thinking to satisfy Joyful by telling her he had seen the empty rooms, he followed Madame, and was taken to the place where he had seen Mariestretched on the floor in drunken stupor ten days before, now swept and garnished for new prey. He turned away, sad at heart, and could not help wishing he had some clew to the poor young creature's whereabouts, yet he was glad also that she was completely lost to Joyful — for why need her dear heart be troubled by sin in which she had no part, and sorrow which she could not mitigate?

He then hastened his steps and found himself excitedly eager to see her. Blessed little heart! She should never have cause to weep again. He yet hardly knew what he was going to do with her — if only he could learn the address of the Drews! How unfortunate to have lost them! Everything took such an unconscionable time! No doubt Nathanael was in communication with them, but to wait for letters to go first to him, and then follow them half around the globe would never do. He called a carriage and decided he would take Joyful out to drive, and then would have a long talk with her and persuade her to go back to Woodbury Center and live at the rector's until he could come for her. Yes — that was the best plan — it might be dreary and sad for her, but it would be only a short time — and to be alone in the world fending for herself was certainly out of the question.

Filled with these thoughts, he hurried along the corridor where the janitor had his four tidy rooms. He could scarcely wait for a response to his imperative knock, yet

the wife was very deliberate in answering the summons, and very distant and dignified as she waved him to a seat with a Mrs. Wilfer-like air. Mark could not help thinking of that austere lady with an inward smile, in spite of his pre-occupation. He took the seat offered, and waited. Mrs. Bings stood before him with folded arms, and also waited.

"I wish to see Miss Heatherby," he said at last. "Is she well?"

The janitor's wife bowed her head, and crossing the room with a firm, masculine tread, took from a small wooden workbox a letter which she gave him, holding it out gingerly, as if reluctant to allow him to touch it.

"What is this?" he asked.

"A note she left for you," she said sternly, and shut her mouth with a grim smile around her compressed lips.

"Left for me! Is she gone?" he cried, rising and seizing his hat. "Where is she?"

"You'd better compose yourself and read your note." She turned her back on him and continued the work she had before her of sponging and pressing a pair of her husband's trousers, which were spread out on an ironing board laid across the backs of two chairs.

Mark felt, but could not interpret to himself, the chill of her contempt. Why this air of mystery? Why had Joyful gone? What had come upon her? He read the note eagerly, and as he read, the blood mounted to his head and surged through his brain.

"My dear Mr. Thorn," it ran; "I don't know what to say to you. I can't see you again, ever. I can't let you take care of me. I thought you were good. I trusted you as I did my dear grand-daddy. Oh, Mr. Thorn, if I could only

die — but I can't! I must live and find Marie. Don't ever try to find me or to see me.

"Mrs. Bings has told me all about it — where I was — and about poor Marie Vaile, and why she was so sad and strange, and how wicked every one is, and a great many things that you knew all the time. I know at last what some of the 'Monsters' are. You never went to see Marie in order to fight them. You too are wicked, and I wish I could have died before I found it out. I wish I could have died believing you to be a true knight.

"I must tell you the reason I can never see you again. It is because, down deep in my heart, I can't believe you are so bad, and I am afraid. I dare not trust myself. I am afraid you will persuade me to forget all I ought to remember, and I shall become at last like poor Marie Vaile. Mrs. Bings tells me that is what you will bring me to, and I can't believe it — and yet she says I must, so I will hide from you forever.

"Good-bye, Mr. Thorn, for always and always. Do not think me ungrateful. You were good to me to take me away, and always to talk about lovely things with me. Thank you, thank you for it all; but now, just let me be lost. I shall be like a pebble thrown in the ocean. I shall lie on the sand and wait — you will never find me again. This one thing more I must tell you. When Mrs. Bings told me what you really are, it made my heart ache more than when I came to know that I never should see my dear grandfather and grandmother again. You see, in them I can still trust, I have not lost them, but now that I have lost my faith in you, oh, Mr. Thorn, it is like losing my soul when I lose yours, for my soul rested in its trust in yours,

and now I have lost you. Before, it seemed as if I had something great and good here in the world with me, but now it is gone, and I know at last that I never had it.

"Don't ever try to find out from the Drews or from Nathanael where I am. I shall never let them know where I am. I can never tell them where I have been. I am ashamed, and feel as if my heart is dead. That is all.

"Mrs. Bings has found me something to do that is sweet and good, for I am taking care of three dear little children; so if you care for me in the good way, which she says you do not, you may know that I am supporting myself and need no one to take care of me. I will try to remember all the beautiful days of last summer, when we talked together and I believed in you. It will be to me like a lovely dream to think about, and forget the rest — and yet this last is in my heart like fire, but sometime I hope it will burn out.

"Forgive me because I can't see you again, and let me be hid from you forever.

"JOYFUL ANTOINETTE HEATHERBY."

Mark rose to his feet and stood as if stunned. The room seemed to reel and the dishes on the dresser to dance about. Mrs. Bings still stood with her back to him and ironed away at the trousers, putting her iron down with heavy thumps. He could hear it hiss as it touched the damp cloth, and could see the steam rise about her head like smoke from infernal fires. How he hated that straight, relentless bracing of the spare shoulders! The very set of her head and the tightly screwed knot of hair on the back of it betokened to him the type of the bigoted fool. He felt the hatred so welling up in him that his fingers quivered

to seize the tool in her hand and brain her with it. For once in his life he realized he had a devil within him. He essayed to speak, but the moisture had left his mouth, and his lips were white and dry.

He turned toward the door and there paused, clinging to it for support. He knew now how he loved Joyful. He would rather lose his life than lose her out of it. Even in this moment his brain was cleared and swept through with a very breeze of thankfulness as he thought what if he had married Louise and gone away with her, while he carried in his heart such a love as this for this girl! What a terrible wrong had he been saved from committing! Then he found his voice and spoke quietly:—

"Mrs. Bings, you have lied to that young woman. You have committed a deadly sin. You have killed —"

But suddenly the woman turned, and all the vials of her wrath were let loose on him.

"I know you and all your kind," she cried, slapping her iron down on its stand, and facing him with arms akimbo. "I belong to the 'W'ite Ribbon Harmy' and I know my duty. I've taken care of that girl. Poor little shorn lamb! She's safe now from the likes of you, and she'll stay safe. I've put a flea in 'er ear. She'll never look at you again; no, not if you were to appear to 'er as a hangel of light with two wings and a crown. She'll know the devil sent you. Poor little broken 'eart of 'er — if you could 'a' seen 'er cry as I did, you'd repent o' your ways. Did you think I could n't read you? I would n't trust any man further 'n I could see the w'ites of 'is eyes. You see this badge?" she pointed to a rag of a ribbon that had once been white, pinned to her dusty black waist. "That badge is

a sign of purity, and it means that I'm going to look after that girl's if she were my own. That's right. Go off, now you know you're found out," she shrieked after him, as he hurried away from the sight of her face. He feared he might strike her dead if he stood there longer.

She turned back to her work, muttering protestations against his ever intruding in her presence again; and Mark, angry and hurt, reeled as he went back through the long corridor, so that he struck against the walls now on this side and now on that, and climbed into his carriage like a drunken man. There he sat and rode about for hours, directing his coachman first to one point and then to another. At last he returned, thinking he would find the janitor and hire him to learn Joyful's whereabouts for him. But Tom Bings was a wise man in his fear of his wife's tongue. He refused to have anything to do with the matter, protesting he never meddled in the women's affairs. At last, through the influence of a crisp greenback — that most potent argument — he consented to do what he could; perhaps he might get a letter to Joyful, which Mark was to send under separate cover.

"But it's the truth I'm telling you. I don't know no more where she is than I know what my wife's mother wore to be married in."

"You know your wife has entirely mistaken her position. I will have the police take it up, if she does n't come to her senses."

But Mark knew he would not do that. He would find a better way than to hound his love to her place of refuge with the police. He would be patient and find her. Surely love would lead him to her.

Later, as he pondered over the situation, he became incensed with a feeling of indignation against Joyful, that she should be so persuaded to think evil of him by a stranger. Yet he considered how crushed must be her old faith in men, after the, doubtless, most brutal methods of Mrs. Bings. Surely the revelation of evil made, as that woman would make it, could be none other than a "Horror of great darkness" spreading over her. How could she know whom to trust! Then again he read her letter, blotted with her tears, and when he came to the words, "It is because, down deep in my heart, I can't believe you are bad, and I am afraid. I dare not trust myself," he pressed them to his lips.

It was with a sadness he had never before experienced, yet with a strange moving of joy within him, as though a new hope had become a part of his daily life, a hope to be pursued, and at last realized, that he returned to his studio and took up earnestly the work in hand.

He wrote to Nathanael, telling of Joyful's desolation only, and her present employment, and begging for information concerning the Drews. Then he waited and worked while the weeks slipped by, for Nathanael had not heard for a month from Elizabeth, and his last letter was still following her about. He replied to Mark in haste, and stated that he was soon to leave for New York, and later would be in Southern California, when he hoped to hunt them up. They could not be lost as long as he was in the world. He wrote buoyantly and hopefully. Everything was going well with him. His letter seemed to bring with it the breath and glow of the desert wind and sun. His invention was being used in the mines of the company, and he was to introduce its use in other mines. He had leaped into a position of im-

portance by sheer brain and energy. He was like a powerful spirit suddenly let loose from chains and imprisonment.

Mark smiled as he read the letter, sitting one day in his studio, and his smile had in it a light of satisfaction. He knew his own hand had broken Nathanael's chain, and unbarred his prison door; and Nathanael knew it also. A strong undercurrent of vital friendship pervaded the letter and made this fact apparent to Mark without the use of set terms.

Still, where were the Drews, and where was Joyful? Mark fell in the way of going frequently to Boston, and spending his Sundays roaming the streets among the residence portions of the city, and even out in the suburbs, scanning the faces of those who rode in carriages with children or walked with them in parks.

Once he was rewarded by a glimpse of Joyful's face, but he was too far away to reach her before she was gone. It was April, and she was dressed in a soft blue cloth. Her abundant dark hair waved beneath a small toque of the same color. The curling tendrils about her neck and ears were there, just as he remembered them. Two little girls of eight and ten, very elaborately dressed, danced on before her, and she led by the hand a boy, fair-haired and beautiful, who gazed up in her face as she looked down and talked to him. They came down the steps of a new and ornate house and entered an open barouche and were whirled away before Mark could hurry near enough to speak. Then for days he haunted the place, but saw no more of her or of the children, so he concluded they were but paying a visit there.

Joyful had lost much of her old color, Mark thought, and her eyes looked large and sad. Seeing her thus, so perfectly

gowned and mature, he realized how much he was losing of her, and yet he must wait. She was now a woman, and when he had found her he must win her anew.

For a time his work progressed slowly, and the order he had received from Mervain Thompson remained untouched except for a few studies for the composition.

One day as he sat before one of these, a woman entered his studio. She was in black, with only a touch of scarlet in her hat and at her throat, enough to add warmth and fervor to her appearance. Her eyes were neither brown nor black, yet they looked both dark and brilliant as she stood before him, silent. For a moment he did not recognize her. Then he stepped forward eagerly, and even held out his hand.

"Ah, Miss Vaile! I had begun to fear you were not going to accept my proposition." He was overjoyed. Perhaps through her he might find Joyful.

"No? But I am here at last. I was sorry to be ill the evening you called — you did call?" She stood before him with her birdlike poise of the head, and the look she gave him was keen.

He grew suddenly wary, and remembering how he had seen her that night, answered evasively: "I called several days later, and found you had gone. The woman gave me no address. Be seated, please."

"No. I was obliged to move, and was very ill for a long time, and — I — hope I am not too late. Can you still use me?"

"I can, indeed. I am lacking just the model I should have —" He paused. The copy of the "Scarlet Letter" he had purchased lay on the stand at her elbow. He saw her

eyes fasten on it. "Yes. My subject is taken from that. Can you find a child, do you think?"

"Of what age?"

"I have chosen the scene of the trial; you remember it? These are my studies."

"I have read it, yes. Some poor mother may be glad to have me borrow her child. I will try."

"You can see from this study something of the style of dress. We must keep to the times and yet — considerable latitude is left us in the matter, as the text gives us the idea that Hester Prynne used her fancy in the modeling of it."

"May I do the same, or do you prefer to design the dress?" She turned suddenly on him, and a light seemed to shine in her eyes that belied her nonchalant air. He hesitated a little; then after a moment's further conversation, he said: "Yes, I think you grasp the idea. Of course the dress is not of the importance that the pose and the expression are. I can modify the costume to please myself. Will you find the child?"

"Yes. Any little Italian beggar baby will do. When do you wish me?"

"As soon as possible."

"I will return in a week or less. Good-bye." She was gone as suddenly as she had appeared.

CHAPTER XXIII

MRS. RENOLDS DISCOVERS A MYSTERY

"Sly Beelzebub took all occasions
To try Job's constancy and patience ;
He took his honours, took his health,
He took his children, took his wealth,
His camels, horses, asses, cows,
And cunning Satan did not take his spouse.

But Heaven that brings out good from evil
And loves to disappoint the Devil,
Had predetermined to restore
Twofold all Job had before,
His children, camels, horses, cows ; —
Short-sighted Satan, not to take his spouse."

— S. T. COLERIDGE.

AFTER Marie left him, Mark stood long before his studies, gazing at them as if he were intent on the composition, but in reality he was not thinking of it. He was living over that night in Boston when he found Joyful. The sight of Marie brought it all back to him with new vividness. He wondered also about Marie, and what Scott Stevens had to do with her. Then his thoughts wandered to Louise and their last evening together, and he lifted his head and laughed, and even as he laughed he thought of his smile in the boat and how Joyful had been displeased with it ; then his thoughts returned to the moment when she had wept in his arms and he had dried her tears.

He seized his hat and walked out. Nothing but action, movement, would allay for a time the hunger of his soul. Again he tramped moodily about, and again he encountered Mrs. Renolds, even as he had six months or more before, and again he rode in her little carriage. She took note of his worn and haggard appearance, and said in her heart, "He has really taken his affair with Louise Parsons very hard."

"You never come near any of us these days, Mr. Thorn. Are you turned into a veritable recluse?"

"Not intentionally, no. Why? Do I appear one?"

"How do I know, when I never see you? You look worn and ill."

He laughed. "Do I, indeed? But I am abnormally well."

"That is just what I should say: Certainly not normally so." They were silent for a time, then she spoke again.

"Have you heard that Mr. Van Burgh married May Carlie?"

"No. It—I thought he preferred some one else." He turned and looked at her, and their eyes met.

"Possibly," she replied, with the faintest hint of a smile on her face.

"Ha!"

Once more they were silent, and then the conversation wandered over other bits of gossip, and at last Mark became restless. He longed to be again on his feet, moving about, thinking his own thoughts. This, Mrs. Renolds, with her subtle appreciation of his moods, quickly perceived.

"Shall I take you back?" she asked.

"I ought to be at work, I suppose. We artists are such an easily diverted, idle class. Of course it is pleasanter to ride about here in the park and watch the spring unfold."

"Then do that. I'm sure it is better for you than work. It may not be kind to say so, but you certainly do look ill, Mr. Thorn. What are you doing now?"

"Come in and see."

"Thank you, I will. May I bring the Van Burghs? They are with me for a time."

"I should be delighted."

"And you will call on them?"

"I will, indeed. Shall it be this evening?"

"Oh — I —" Mrs. Renolds caught her breath. She had not expected him to be so precipitate. "I have another guest who — pardon me — whom you may not care to meet. Do forgive me if I am on forbidden ground — I —"

"I assure you I am quite in the dark, Mrs. Renolds. There is no one living whom I would not willingly meet in your house. That goes without saying."

She lifted her brows. "In this case it hardly goes without saying, since rumor has it, and one never knows what to believe of such bits of gossip, that you and Miss Parsons quarreled and that she is shortly to be married to Scott Stevens. Louise also is my guest."

Mark laughed, not bitterly, nor contemptuously; yet when he spoke there was a slightly sardonic expression about his lips. "Then I will not appear — for your sake only, and possibly for hers, although she would no doubt take the situation calmly." Again he laughed.

"You take your wounds merrily. I see my kindly commiseration was all wasted."

"My wounds? Ah, you see mine as well as hers were soon healed. I would like to propound one question, however, to any one wise enough to answer it. How came Scott

Stevens, who is not gifted with great originality, to succeed in persuading her to what I could not?"

"I may not quite catch your meaning. To marry him, when you could not persuade her to marry you? To me, I confess, that is one of life's mysteries." The soft pallor of Mrs. Renolds' face gave way to a shade only of pink.

Mark hastened to explain. "Not at all! Not at all! I put my question badly. I mean how did he manage to persuade her to go through the conventional form of marriage, a ceremony which is meant not for enlightened souls such as she chose to consider hers and mine, but 'for the vulgar herd'?"

"You mystify me, Mr. Thorn. Oh, yes. She was devoted to some kind of cult — I have forgotten what —"

"She had been listening to some damned nonsense, and when she refused to join 'the vulgar herd' and marry me in the good old style, I mildly suggested that I join her cult and that we follow her new, or ancient faith to its finish, and I take her without."

"Mr. Thorn!"

"But this she also refused, with the exclamation point such as you have just used, but — there you are. She refused to believe in marriage with any mundane form requiring the intervention of priest or magistrate, yet she could not live up to her faith. I say, why have a faith if you cannot live up to it?"

"You should not have humored her whim, Mr. Thorn. Louise Parsons is a woman who would respect a man in proportion to his ability to dominate her. Now Mr. Stevens is eminently conventional. In his life he may have gone at times a little beyond the pale; indeed, I have been told

"Then do that. I'm sure it is better for you than work. It may not be kind to say so, but you certainly do look ill, Mr. Thorn. What are you doing now?"

"Come in and see."

"Thank you, I will. May I bring the Van Burghs? They are with me for a time."

"I should be delighted."

"And you will call on them?"

"I will, indeed. Shall it be this evening?"

"Oh—I—" Mrs. Renolds caught her breath. She had not expected him to be so precipitate. "I have another guest who—pardon me—whom you may not care to meet. Do forgive me if I am on forbidden ground—I—"

"I assure you I am quite in the dark, Mrs. Renolds. There is no one living whom I would not willingly meet in your house. That goes without saying."

She lifted her brows. "In this case it hardly goes without saying, since rumor has it, and one never knows what to believe of such bits of gossip, that you and Miss Parsons quarreled and that she is shortly to be married to Scott Stevens. Louise also is my guest."

Mark laughed, not bitterly, nor contemptuously; yet when he spoke there was a slightly sardonic expression about his lips. "Then I will not appear—for your sake only, and possibly for hers, although she would no doubt take the situation calmly." Again he laughed.

"You take your wounds merrily. I see my kindly commiseration was all wasted."

"My wounds? Ah, you see mine as well as hers were soon healed. I would like to propound one question, however, to any one wise enough to answer it. How came Scott

Stevens, who is not gifted with great originality, to succeed in persuading her to what I could not?"

"I may not quite catch your meaning. To marry him, when you could not persuade her to marry you? To me, I confess, that is one of life's mysteries." The soft pallor of Mrs. Renolds' face gave way to a shade only of pink.

Mark hastened to explain. "Not at all! Not at all! I put my question badly. I mean how did he manage to persuade her to go through the conventional form of marriage, a ceremony which is meant not for enlightened souls such as she chose to consider hers and mine, but 'for the vulgar herd'?"

"You mystify me, Mr. Thorn. Oh, yes. She was devoted to some kind of cult — I have forgotten what —"

"She had been listening to some damned nonsense, and when she refused to join 'the vulgar herd' and marry me in the good old style, I mildly suggested that I join her cult and that we follow her new, or ancient faith to its finish, and I take her without."

"Mr. Thorn!"

"But this she also refused, with the exclamation point such as you have just used, but — there you are. She refused to believe in marriage with any mundane form requiring the intervention of priest or magistrate, yet she could not live up to her faith. I say, why have a faith if you cannot live up to it?"

"You should not have humored her whim, Mr. Thorn. Louise Parsons is a woman who would respect a man in proportion to his ability to dominate her. Now Mr. Stevens is eminently conventional. In his life he may have gone at times a little beyond the pale; indeed, I have been told

he has; but even so, he would only do the conventionally incorrect thing which society allows and throws a mantle over, but, mind you, Louise must do only the correct thing if she becomes Mrs. Stevens."

Mark turned on her with suddenly illumined face. "In other words, Louise is stopping with you, and buying her trousseau, and having a generally good time, according to a conventional young lady's ideas of a good time, and you — you choose to say merely — 'it is rumored' and 'one never knows how much to believe of such gossip.' Pardon me — Why did you not tell me the truth?"

"It was a ladylike subterfuge, Mr. Thorn."

"But why, pray? A man would have dealt out the truth in one sledge-hammer blow. 'That girl of yours, the one who jilted you, is at our house buying her wedding garments. She is to marry that pig of a Stevens who so cleverly stepped into your shoes. They are to take their wedding journey in his yacht, sailing up and down the Mediterranean. I tell you, Thorn, if you wish a beautiful woman, put money in thy purse.'"

"Mr. Thorn, that is brutal."

"Yes — and the facts are brutal. I am that fool of a Jacob who served seven years for his love. Why, I ask for psychologic reasons, did you cover the truth with a mere glance at it?"

"To spare you, Mr. Thorn. I wished to wound as little as possible."

"Ah, but the sledge-hammer blow wounds less because it only stuns, and still spares a man's self-respect, while as for the other — it takes a keen knife to cut a man's heart out."

"Thank you, Mr. Thorn. You have taught me something — and yet, believe me, my only thought was to spare you."

"That is it. You thought I needed sparing, which wounds a man's self-love."

"Forgive me."

"Mrs. Renolds!" he cried, waking to sudden contrition, "it is I who should ask that. I have been brutal. I did need sparing. My mood turned me into a savage and I struck at you, manlike. As I said before, we are brutal. However, you can believe me when I tell you that the wound is healed. You and I between us had managed to dig up the corpse of my dead love, which I thought was buried beyond our depth, and it was not fragrant — forgive me again, but you have also helped to reinter it more effectually. The grave is heaped mountains high with the world's earth-clods."

They rode on for a time in silence; at last she uttered the thought that had lain in her heart during their whole conversation. "May I ask who has been your physician? You say your wound is healed, and so soon, yet you do not look like one who has fully recovered — from — something."

"The physician was — to tell the truth I have had no physician. I simply made the discovery that I have been saved. I might have been married ere this to a combination of line and color — to an artist's conception. Like old Andrea Del Sarto, I might have been whining out my complaint by this time, that were it not for my wife I could be doing great things in my art. When I was with Louise, my senses were always filled with her beauty. I have learned that such a condition is not love, and that of itself is a wholesome lesson. Her charms appealed to my æsthetic

sense, not to my soul, hence my real wound has been to my vanity — to find a worse man amply filling my place in her heart — and — but you see I mean what I say, except for this last, my wounds are healed indeed." He looked wearily off through the vistas of the park. A robin sang his fitful note in a clump of shrubbery. He gave no heed either to bird songs or to the loveliness of the spring, and Mrs. Renolds perceived that neither was he thinking of her.

"I will take you back now," she said, "but really I think you ought to stop work and rest. You were in your studio half of last summer, you know. Go abroad, Mr. Thorn."

"You are most kind to think of my condition or happiness at all. Shall you go abroad this summer?"

Her face brightened. "I had not thought of it — yet I may."

"Ah? Possibly I may go abroad — but that depends." He was again thinking of Joyful. If only he could find her. "How long does Miss Parsons remain with you?" he asked, as they parted.

"I think only a week longer."

"I will call on the Van Burghs then, if they are still with you; if not —"

"I shall be there, of course," she said smilingly. "I am usually having tea every afternoon about the time artists are leaving their work for lack of light."

"Good. I will put on a pleasanter face than I have worn to-day, and come to you for tea."

During the week which followed this conversation, Mark received word from Tom Bings, whom he had so far won over to his cause by sundry fees as to induce him to attempt to get from his wife some information concerning Joyful,

that the family with whom she lived contemplated spending a year abroad, and were to take her with them. This put Mark in an agitated frame of mind, so much so that he incautiously wrote the janitor that he must learn the name of the people and the date of their sailing. This letter the ever watchful Mrs. Bings one day found in her husband's coat pocket, and without the slightest compunction, read. Then was let loose on poor Bings a torrent of righteous indignation.

"Oh, I know you men, you 're all alike. You, Tom Bings! My 'usband, selling that girl's soul for a few dollars to carry around in your dirty pocket. I suppose 'e thinks 'e'll go along to Europe with 'er, but it won't do him any good, I can tell 'im that right 'ere and now. I've put a flea in 'er ear. It would n't do 'im any good if 'e sailed in the same boat with 'er to the North Pole. She's just one of the kind, you might tear 'er 'eart out of her, poor little thing, with you two men 'ounding 'er to earth. I've told 'er what 'e is over and over. I've 'eard enough of the goings on of those artists, and 'e's one of them, and the way 'e looked at me you'd have thought 'e was Satan 'imself, and you, Tom Bings, a-throwing 'er over to 'im. That's what I call makin' straight for fire and brimstone on your own two legs, of your own free will, spite of all I can do, 'olding on to your coat-tails to keep you back, and takin' 'er along with you and shovin' 'er in. But I'll save 'er. 'E'll never get 'er."

Tom moved about the room sulkily, filling his pipe and muttering. At last he ventured to interrupt her steady flow of words. "You think you are doing her a good turn, do you? Well, I can tell you you're keeping her out of a

good home, that's what you're doing. I can see as far through a millstone as you can."

"Oh, you can, can you? 'Ow came he to find 'er? W'at business 'ad 'e there? I can put two and two together without seeing through any millstones. I understand the wickedness and infamy of men. But, thank goodness! I won't 'ave to be watchdog for 'er much longer. Come first o' June she'll be safe, and 'e can stand on shore and wistle for 'er. 'E don't know the name of the family she's with, and 'e don't know the name o' the boat she goes on, and 'e don't know if they're sailing from Boston or New York. I've read in my papers and I know w'at men'll do to get their own way, 'nd what dreadful crimes they'll commit. There's the very last number of the *Woman's Kingdom* tells about a man who took his girl up to the top of a church, and cut 'er all to pieces. There! Tom Bings. You take your pipe out of 'ere. No lighting it in my presence. I've told you till I'm worn out talking, if you will hang on to your sinful indulgences, take yourself off w'ere there are no women to be insulted by them. Tobacco is an offense to any good woman's nostrils."

Then Tom Bings did as he was told. He took himself off to the nearest saloon, and there ordered beer to go with his pipe, and sat himself down in peace to indite a letter to Mark, containing the last bit of news he had gathered from his wife's remarks, after this manner:—

"MR. H. THORN, ESQ.:

"DEAR SIR, I've done all I can, and this is the last. The old woman found your letter asking for information in my pocket, and jumped on me. She's been buzzing at me ever since like an alarm clock, and I don't expect her to

run down for a week. She's an eight-day one. But this much she let out. The family are to sail first of June sometime. Moreover, their name is Burt. I saw the girl walking into a store with the kids the other day, and I got the little chap by himself and asked his name. He said Harry Burt. Then I asked his father's name, and he said George; and then I asked him where he lived, and he said something, I could n't tell just what, but it's in the big-bug part of Boston — I could see that by the turnout. The girl called him then, and they climbed into a rig and drove off, so that is all for the present.

"Yours truly,

"T. BINGS.

"P.S. Better let up on letter writing."

CHAPTER XXIV

A CHANCE MEETING

"We met there face to face :
I said the crown should fall from thee ; once more
We meet as in that ghastly vestibule :
Look to my brow ! Have I redeemed my pledge ?"

TRUE to her word, Marie Vaile returned in a week. She was accompanied by a sad-eyed, apathetic young mother with a babe in her arms

"I have brought the child, Mr. Thorn," she said, "and the mother will wait here until you are through, and when you wish it she will bring it again." Then Marie stepped nearer him and spoke in a low voice. "She is a poor unfortunate I found in the street. I have been caring for them and feeding them up all the week to get the baby in better condition. I do hope you can use the child. She needs the money." The baby gazed up at Mark with great, unwinking eyes. It had been well fed and lay quiet in placid content. "I can make it smile, see?" and Marie bent over it, smiling herself, and touching its cheek with the tip of her finger, and the child twisted its face into a weird little grin. Marie looked appealingly in Mark's eyes, and he saw she wished him to use the wan little baby from pity.

"Oh, yes. The child will do finely. It has big dark eyes, you see."

"Yes. I thought of the eyes," cried Marie, gladly.

Then she took the mother and babe into the dressing room, and when she returned, both Marie and the child were transformed. On the bosom of her own dress she had fashioned a scarlet letter of fine cloth and gold embroidery. She carried the baby in her arms, and the little one looked indeed a veritable witch child, its small old face framed in a close cap with tiny peak at the top, and turned open at the sides with lace revers. Its black elf-locks escaped the confinement of the cap over the forehead and temples, and surrounded its wan face, while its great eyes shone out like cairngorms under the dark fringe. Marie had fashioned the child's dress after a quaint old pattern of a dark red-brown stuff — the hems edged with very narrow gold bands. The waist fitted the small body. It was low at the neck, and the close sleeves ended at the elbow.

Her own dress was of a changeable material, silken in texture, a dull old blue with shifting lights that seemed to throw out gleams now of green and now of gold; and the skirt, gathered to a cord at the pointed waistline, hung in long, soft folds and wrinkled about her feet. Her rich hair lay in shining waves about her face, and she had drawn it high at the back and fastened the soft coils at the crown of her head with an ornate, gold-tipped shell comb. Her sleeves were close at the wrists and so long as to cover all of her hands but the beautiful fingers, on one of which she wore a costly jewel. The gown was cut away from the throat, and her slender neck with its delicate curves rose in translucent whiteness above it. She stood a moment with her birdlike poise of the head, looking at Mark, holding the child on one arm, the other dropped straight at her side. She did not smile, — her manner seemed more that

of one leading a forlorn hope, and her eyes questioned him in silence.

Mark looked at her a moment, taking in every detail, then he said, "You are an artist, Miss Vaile, and a daring one."

She smiled, and after an instant replied, "I know it."

Then Mark thought, as he often did, how Joyful had once objected to his smile, and now he understood it as he had not before. He took Marie's hand and led her to a raised dais in a far corner of his studio, where the light fell warmly over her. "Stand here a moment and we will talk it over," he said. "Stand just as you did at first. Is the child heavy?"

"No."

Then Mark sat silent before her, and the moments passed. Presently he took his pencil and began to work. At last he asked, "Why, then, did you not make it your profession?"

"Make what my profession, Mr. Thorn?"

"Art. I said you are an artist, and you said 'I know it.' Now I ask, why did you not make it your profession?"

A tremor passed over her, and suddenly her expression became what he was looking for — at least it was a mood, he might find others better, but would have this. Her eyes burned with a warm glow while she looked, not at him, but at something beyond him.

"Oh, I was artist enough by nature — to do — to do — what most artists do, only I did not wait to achieve something in art first, like most of you. I did n't even know I was an artist. I thought I was nothing but a lonely girl, and —"

She paused, while he worked rapidly for a few moments, then he said, "Go on, Miss Vaile, tell me more." Although seemingly absorbed in his work, his manner was interested and kindly, and she spoke again, not as if giving a confidence, but as in soliloquy.

"My life was dull — it was meanly dull. I thought I had found a joy in it. I stopped making tea every afternoon for stupid old women and curates, I — I tried to seize the joy, and —" The baby in her arms grew restless. She shifted it a little, and it leaned its head on her shoulder and thrust its small hand in the neck of her dress. A burning flush suffused her face for the first time at the touch of the baby hand. Mark looked up and then bent eagerly to his work.

"And what then?" he asked.

"I had a dream. I thought it was real, but it was not, — and then — even when I knew it was not, I still believed in it, — because it was beautiful. I thought I could make it become real — could make it true. I threw away everything for it — my very soul I cast away — and — and I was swept into a maelstrom and was lost — and — now, now I am here posing for this." She touched the letter on her bosom.

Eagerly, fiercely Mark worked, while the silence of the room remained unbroken. The child fell asleep on her shoulder just as it lay, one hand thrust in her dress, the other small fist in its mouth. At last Mark took notice of her that she had grown deathly white. His heart smote him, and he sprang forward and caught the child from her, and placing one arm about her waist he supported her to a couch.

"Here, take it," he said, dropping the baby in its mother's

lap. Then he brought water and bathed Marie's forehead and temples, and gave her wine. She seized the glass and drank eagerly, and again Mark thought of how he had seen her on that terrible evening when he had found Joyful but to lose her again. He put the bottle away and gave her no more, although he saw her eyes follow it furtively. The baby woke and cried, and the mother hushed it, rocking it to and fro in her arms, and it grew still.

Mark went back to his easel, and soon became lost to everything but his work, rapt in his theme. He was seeing in his mind the expression Marie's face had worn when she said "I had a dream. I thought it was real, but it was not." At last he rose and walked back to study his canvas, and Marie stood beside him, dressed for the street, while the young mother waited at the door.

"I must go now, Mr. Thorn. When shall I come again?"

"To-morrow morning."

Marie looked down. Her lips were feverish and her eyes burned. "I can't come to-morrow," she said in a low voice, "and maybe not the day after. May we say Thursday?"

"I wish to get on as rapidly as possible." Mark was saddened, for he guessed why she refused to come for two days. "Won't you try to come to-morrow? This has been a severe siege, I know, Miss Vaile, but I will be more considerate hereafter. You shall not pose more than fifteen minutes at a time. You must pardon me for this. I—I forgot you were made of flesh and blood and could grow weary."

She laughed. "I wish I were made of stone," she said.

"You will try to be here to-morrow," he pleaded.

"It will be impossible, Mr. Thorn," she said imperiously.

"I prefer to set a day I know I can keep. Shall we say Thursday?"

"Very well," he said, but still looked gravely and intently at her. She felt herself held by his eyes, and became embarrassed, dreading lest he divine her reason. She turned and gazed at the canvas.

"You have done wonders in so short a time," she said. "You will soon have finished, Mr. Thorn." But he did not reply. "I am glad you did n't disapprove of the dress. I see you have kept the colors. I searched half over New York for just that material, and where do you think I found it at last?"

"I can't imagine."

"In a furniture shop, where antiques are manufactured." They both laughed, and the tension of his mood was broken, as she wished it to be.

"And where did you get your design?"

"From an old portrait that hangs in the hall at home in England. It was one of my ancestors, and they were reformers, so I thought I might use it, only I have chosen a color that makes the scarlet more vivid. You remember the text says, 'Her dress was of a splendor which was in accordance with the taste of the age, and beyond what was allowed by the rules of the colony,' so I chose something as rich as I could get in material."

"You were quite right in your conception — but — are you caring for this woman?" He glanced toward the mother of the babe.

"Yes, I must — we might lose them else, and anyway she might die. It was wretched where I found them." Marie shivered.

"No doubt," said Mark. "Such things are awful." He thrust some bills in her hand. "Come, Miss Vaile, you must be at no expense for this, and later we will settle for all your pains. Be here to-morrow, if you can — and — if not, come as soon as possible. I am always here in the morning."

Thus intermittently the work progressed until the 1st of June was nearly at hand. While Mark was engrossed in his art, and the one thought that possessed him, many things were transpiring in which he was vaguely interested. Indeed, all events save his purposeful labor and his love for Joyful receded from him. Even to know that his old love had married and gone on her wedding journey stirred him only to a quiet smile.

"And they did n't take the Mediterranean trip, after all. They are gone but for a few weeks, no one knows where, and this summer they will take a yachting party to the Land of the Midnight Sun," said Mrs. Renolds, as she handed Mark his tea one afternoon. She was the only one who kept him in touch with his former world, although his visits to her were infrequent, and she never appeared in his studio unless to bring friends.

"Ah, why did they change?" Mark gazed vaguely through the long vista of Mrs. Renolds' drawing-room as seen from the small Turkish nook where her guests usually accepted tea from her deft hand. None poured tea with a prettier grace than Mrs. Renolds.

"How could I know? How does any one ever know why Louise does things?"

"Are you quite sure the change of plan was her suggestion?"

"No. But it is like her to do some erratic thing at the last moment, like going off on this queer wedding journey and making everything very mysterious. I believe we agreed, didn't we, you and I, that her motives are usually unaccountable, like this whole matter of marrying Scott Stevens, after all her high and poetic aspirations — her longings and soul quivers, and throes, to turn about so suddenly and marry the most conventional — Ah, well! —" Mrs. Renolds ceased speaking, and sighed with a little shake of the head. Mark seldom mentioned Louise, never unless she introduced the topic in a clever way she had. She could not yet determine whether the indefinable barrier between herself and the artist was because his wounds were not so fully healed as he implied, or whether his experience had led him to clothe himself hereafter in armor which should be impervious to Cupid's darts. However, Louise as a topic of conversation seemed to give a tone of intimacy to their companionship which nothing else afforded, and Mrs. Renolds did not resist its intrusion. Now she paused, since Mark evidently had lost interest for the moment, still dreamily sipping his tea, and gazing as if he saw something at the end of the vista of her drawing-room. She even glanced out into the conservatory herself; then, as he put down his empty cup, arrested his departure with the query: —

"Why do you think it might not be her suggestion? Won't you smoke? You know I never dislike your cigarettes."

"From something that occurred in my studio just before the wedding. Thanks, it is awfully good of you to let me smoke here."

Mrs. Renolds, with wide eyes and parted lips, leaned forward and looked at him and shook her head. "In your studio! What do you mean, Mr. Thorn — were they there?"

"It was while Louise was with you — did she not tell you?"

Mrs. Renolds did not attempt to conceal her surprise. She thought it the height of indelicacy for Louise to take the successful man to her former lover's studio. Why did she do it? Mark saw the question in those dark, lifted eyebrows. He saw also the criticism, and, willing to save Louise from adverse comment, he explained.

"It was for my aunt's sake. She is unduly fond of us both, you know, so we patched up a truce between us, and I invited Louise to bring Scott and select their wedding gift, and she was gracious enough to accept my courtesy, and also to tell me she had never been great enough for me and all that kind of thing. Hereafter my aunt's home is to be our common meeting ground, where everything is to be amicable and our intercourse set back as far as possible on the old footing of camaraderie."

"How wise you are, and how patient, Mr. Thorn!" In her heart she said, "And what a blind fool Louise has been!"

Yet Mrs. Renolds with her millions was not really competent to judge and properly weigh the motives which might influence another woman with no millions, since her care was not so much how to acquire them as how to bestow them; while Mark Thorn, for the moment smoking and seeing visions, was thinking of neither possibility. Certainly, although he enjoyed Mrs. Renolds and appre-

ciated her friendship, he was quite evidently not seeking her fortune, and she, wise woman, in spite of her liking for Mark, was well pleased to cloak that regard with simple good fellowship, until she could make him think of her with more active sentiment, and at the same time imagine the initiative his own. She would never allow a man to know himself led to his wooing. She would go unwooed else, and allow neither him nor the world to guess at a warmer regard in her.

Tentatively her eyes now followed the direction of Mark's gaze, and they both sat silent. Then, "But I interrupted you," she said. "What occurred in your studio? I am very curious."

"That is hard to tell you. I don't really know, myself. It was not any particular event, it was more an atmosphere that permeated the moment. The place seemed charged with electric disturbance, indefinable, and apparently generated without cause—at least, as far as Louise and I were concerned. I had a model and was stupidly busy, so I let them prowl around as they liked. I heard him say something about finding the Mediterranean trip impossible, and heard her cry of surprise and disappointment, and then suddenly I became aware of the charged atmosphere, and that is all. They saw my model, and knew, of course, that I was engrossed, so stayed but a short time."

Mark had contrived a wide ell from the main part of his studio as his workroom, which, while it could be seen from some parts of the larger portion of the place, had still the appearance of being secluded for private uses. On the dais of the alcove in this ell Marie posed for Mark's conception of Hester Prynne. His more familiar guests frequently

strolled about the rest of his studio at their idle pleasure, while Mark, oftentimes unheeding their coming or going, worked on at his easel in his own corner. The imaginary line that separated them from him was seldom crossed, or his labor interrupted, except by special invitation.

It was one rainy April morning, not long before the wedding, that Scott Stevens and Louise made their visit to the studio. Mark had expected them for several days, and had placed in view some of his most attractive studies, from which Louise was to make her selection.

"You are to take all the liberty you please here," said Mark. "If you don't care for any of these finished pieces, here is a portfolio full of studies from which to select, and in the meantime I will go on with my work. Say what you please about them. I shall be oblivious."

"You are too dear, Mark. Do you mean I am to have anything I please of all these? How lovely! We must study them very carefully, Scott, and you must help me. I want Mark to think I have made a good choice. Yes, indeed, Mark, go back, don't let us interrupt you."

So Mark returned to his easel, and Marie Vaile, who had sat unheeding what was passing, resting in a curtained niche, rose and took her position on the dais with the baby on her arm, and the work went on.

Louise was very beautiful that morning, with a stately, classic beauty. The long lines and soft coloring of her perfect gown emphasized the grace of her figure, and the delicate opal tints of her complexion. She was content with herself, and glad that Mark was dear and reasonable about the whole thing. While she moved from picture to picture, studying each one earnestly, Scott watched her

with unconcealed admiration. He was actively affable and prone to agree with all she said.

Presently she paused before one of the finished pieces, a smooth bay with gay craft mirrored in it, a wonderful arch of sky, and all in a glow of rose and gold light as seen through a thin veil of sunset-tinted mist. "Oh, this is charming. Look, Scott!" And Scott looked, walking slowly backward to get a perfect view. Suddenly, as though drawn by a magnet he turned his face away from the picture toward Mark's corner, and found himself gazing into Marie's eyes, which burned and glowed through his conventional mask, eating their way into his soul like fire, until he seemed to turn to ashes in their blaze.

Louise knelt before the picture, absorbed in its beauty, then rose and moved back, making two rings with her gloved hands through which she gazed, shutting off surrounding objects.

"Mark, where did you paint this wonderful evening sky and water piece?"

"In the Bay of Naples. Do you like it?"

"Immensely! Scott, it fires me with enthusiasm for our Mediterranean trip. Shall we see such beauty as this there, Scott?"

A quiver passed over Marie's frame. She held the child closer until it cried out, even as the child had cried in Hester Prynne's arms, while Scott still gazed in her eyes and at the scarlet letter on her breast.

As he did not reply, Louise looked up at him. "Scott," she cried, "are you ill? Why are you so pale?"

Mark was not heeding them. He had seen a look in Marie's face he wished to paint—the look of Hester

Prynne when she gazed in Arthur Dimmesdale's eyes and refused to tell the name of the father of her child. He wished Scott and Louise would go, that he might work.

"Scott," said Louise again, and laid her hand on his arm. He turned and walked feebly toward the picture. "Are you ill, Scott?"

Then he braced himself, and the color returned to his face. "No, no—Only a passing pain. You know, Louise, I can't take that Mediterranean trip. I am sorry, if it will disappoint you."

"Not take it! But you said you would, only this morning—not ten minutes ago, Scott. Why can't you? I am disappointed."

"I thought I could ten minutes ago, but now it comes over me that I cannot, that is all." He seemed to speak roughly, and she looked up in his face in surprise, but he smiled down at her, and Scott Stevens knew how to smile.

"Then—then I shall choose this," she answered, looking at the picture, "if I am never to see Naples from the sea. Mark, this will have to be my Mediterranean trip, and you will have given it to me, after all," she called out to him.

"Thank you," said Mark. "I am glad you chose that one. It is a favorite of mine."

CHAPTER XXV

SUNRISE ON A HILLTOP

"For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements rage, the fiend voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be at rest!"

—ROBERT BROWNING.

THE time arrived at last which Nathanael Stoddard had so long hoped and labored for. He had been given a position of importance by his employers, had been allowed to test and perfect his invention in their mines, and had, after great effort and unremitting attention to their interests, succeeded in securing their coöperation in its manufacture and introduction in other places.

Eleven months had passed since he had left his sterile farm and already he found himself on the road to fortune. Given the opportunity, he had had the brains and energy to develop the possibilities. That which had been stored up within him while he was patiently toiling over his father's stony acres, and submitting to what had seemed to him at the time, the inevitable, which was eating his heart out during those years of slavery and dullness, now that it was let loose in its natural field of activity proved to be a very catapult of power.

"That young chap," said one of his employers, "is worth one of our mines to us. He'd plow through the universe to conquer an obstacle. I showed him some of the difficulties of that Sunset Claim, and he said, 'I love a tussle with elemental nature. When a man has overcome primal forces and molded them to his own uses, it is an inspiring feat. He feels hand in glove with the Creator of them, so to speak.' It's my opinion he'll make a success of it."

Had Mark met Nathanael suddenly, he would hardly have known the sun-browned, sinewy fellow. His very physique seemed to have grown larger since his emancipation to larger conditions. Certain it was that Elizabeth Drew, standing one morning watching the sunrise from a height on the island of Catalina, did not know him for a moment, as — feeling the disturbance of a near presence when she had thought herself alone — she turned suddenly and looked in his face. They stood silent for an instant gazing at each other, she with the sunlight of the morning in her eyes — he with the sunlight of his risen hope in his.

He smiled and held out both his hands toward her. She wavered, standing like a dignified queen between him and the rising sun; then she placed her hands in his, and her face lighted with an answering smile of glad welcome that betrayed in an instant of time an eternity of love, unknown to herself.

"Nathanael, how is this possible!" she said, drawing in her breath and hardly uttering the words aloud, as if she feared he might be a vision conjured out of her morning dreams, to vanish at the sound of her voice.

For him, so long had he cherished the thought of her, his inspiration from day to day, so long his heart had been

calling out to her through space telling her of his love, it seemed to him that she must know; and now standing still silent, unable to put his tremendous emotion in words, he slowly drew her towards him, his eyes fixed on hers, until their lips met.

"This is how it is possible," he cried joyfully. "The glory and the awakening have come at last. See." He turned her again toward the blaze of sunlight that now broke above the horizon covering the beautiful Bay of Avalon and the ocean beyond with molten gold — pale morning-gold and rose.

Elizabeth's cheeks burned, and her lips quivered. She had been swept out of herself by his intensity and her own joy, yet, so long had she been possessed by the idea that he was Joyful's lover, that she could not in a moment adjust her mind to this greeting, nor to his whole expression and bearing and the revelation it brought her. So again, for a longer space of time they stood silent, gazing; she at the sea, and he, with respectful tenderness, on her illumined face. The light played over her shining hair. He thought it had grown more beautiful than it used to be. At last she lifted her eyes to his, and knew he was not Joyful's lover, but her own. For an instant, and suddenly she felt herself disloyal to the child, and drew a step back, then she swayed and put out a groping hand, as if she were feeling for the truth.

Nathanael placed his arm about her and led her to a jutting rock. "Suppose we sit here a little while and talk," he said. "How long is it — eleven months — eleven years I would better say — since we bade each other good-bye? You remember the scolding you gave me

once? It has borne fruit. I have come to you full of boasting and pride."

"You are not the same man now, Nathanael." She knew the man who had timidly asked then if he might sometimes write to her would not have dared meet her thus.

"No, not the same man, thanks to you and Mr. Thorn; but the same man I had the heart to be, and the same heart to meet you with, Elizabeth."

She covered her eyes with her hand a moment, as if to shut out the glory of the sea and sky, that she might the better look within and understand something in her heart. "I am bewildered, Nathanael. How do we two come to be away off here on this island, alone on a mountain top watching the sun rise? Where is Joyful?"

He laughed and took the hand that covered her eyes in his. "It is the simplest thing in the world, Elizabeth. You came here to see this sunrise, and I followed you."

"Where is Joyful?" she asked again.

"I don't know — somewhere in the land of the living. I think Mr. Thorn knows. I have a letter from him in my pocket. What has Joyful to do with us?" She was silent. "Elizabeth, I've been raising that crop you advised me to cultivate. You remember what I told you then? My self-conceit has grown to enormous size, and your reaping time has come."

"Sometimes we sow for others to reap. Give an account of yourself. Did you just happen here? I can't get over the wonder of it."

"No, nothing ever happens, I take it; not to me at least. Every step of my life seems to have been planned and

worked for, from the time my blessed mother slaved to make me the man I am. No. Didn't you receive my letter?"

"I have had none for over a month."

"Ah! That would have told you how I come to be in this part of the world, but never mind, this is better. I have been traveling about in the wild, rough places of the earth, visiting mines. I won't go into details now, but the same business took me to Los Angeles to meet a company of mine owners, and I gladly did so. I hoped I might take enough time for myself to seek you. Yesterday morning I found your names on the hotel register and learned that you had come here, and of course I took the next boat."

"Then you arrived last evening?"

"Yes — but you had gone off on some excursion with others, and I waited."

"Yes?"

"I could afford to wait a little longer, Elizabeth, and now —"

"Tell me all from the beginning, please — all about your work, and successes — I can see success in your eyes, in your whole bearing — and certainly you deserve it."

"Do I?" he said happily. "We'll see if I have it. When was the beginning? The day I said good-bye to you? But that was an ending."

"Are n't endings usually beginnings? That closed your old life, but it also began your new."

"That day was neither the close nor the beginning of what I am to tell you."

"Never mind, begin there, because I know all up to that time."

"Do you? Very well." Then Nathanael began, not at all in the proud and vainglorious spirit of which he had boasted, but with the dear and decorous modesty of the lad of Woodbury Center, who adored while loving. His wooing was simple and tender, yet underneath it all was a gentle insistence not to be put aside. Long they talked, and the world spun round until the sun was high above the horizon. Then Elizabeth rose.

"Come," she said, "we must go down. Mother will be waiting breakfast. She was sleeping when I left." They went slowly down the steep hillside together. Presently she paused at a rough place in the path, and looked down on him, laughing, as he turned to give her his aid.

"What amuses you?" he said, as he led her carefully down.

"You do, Nathanael. You are so changed. It is magnificent."

"How changed?"

"You walk like a king — as if you were superior to everything — as if nothing on earth mattered to you — as if you could shove aside anything you did n't like, or step over it."

"So I would. There isn't a man on earth I would change places with just now." Then she sighed. "You see? I told you you would some day have to reap your own sowing."

"It is n't that."

"What is it, then?"

"That you could n't have said — a part of what you have just now said — long ago. That you felt my answer would have been different unless you had met with success, or had something to bring me besides yourself."

"A man has no business to love a woman — no — I mean to ask a woman to love him until he has enough grit and energy to make something of himself for her sake."

"But you might have saved yourself — have saved us both — many sad hours."

"You have been my inspiration, just the same."

"What if I had married in the meantime — a man of not half your worth — as —"

"As you might have done?"

"Yes."

"I am not going to consider such a possibility now. Why should I? It is not to do over again. This is one of the cases where experience cannot be the teacher." He laughed buoyantly, "I feel like standing on the top of Sugarloaf Rock and whooping to the skies."

"How very undignified, Nathanael!" she said gayly. "I found a 'Mrs. Grundy' at the hotel, away off here in little Avalon."

"Did you so?"

"She grumbled because a mother allowed me to chaperon her young daughter over to the other side of the island with yesterday's picnic party."

"No doubt she was quite right. We'll be married right away. Then you'll be able to chaperon girls much older than yourself."

"You haven't asked mother if you can have me yet."

"Ah! That won't take long. We'll be married to-morrow — to-day —"

"Is that the way you mean to dominate — settle things your own way, without even consulting me?"

"Stand still a moment while we are out of sight from

the whole world. Tell me you will go home with me as my wife, Elizabeth. I mean now, Elizabeth, back to Denver." She caught her breath. "Ah, say it," he begged. "I'm a Western man now. The ways of the West suit me. We always do the straight, common-sense thing there, and snap our fingers at some of the world's ways. Why, isn't this sense? Haven't we waited long enough?"

"We'll go down the hill, dear, and talk it over with mother."

He kissed her, and they took their way down in silence. When they reached the little hotel, she left him. "I will tell mother and prepare her a little, and we'll breakfast together," she said. "We'll join you soon."

Then, while Nathanael paced restlessly on the hotel verandah she arranged Mrs. Drew's hair as usual, but at first was silent, while she brushed the long, silvery strands and fastened the bit of lace her mother always wore, with dainty touch. Presently she held out her hand. "Look, mother," she cried joyously, showing the ring that sparkled on her finger.

"My child! Where did thee get this?"

"On the top of the mountain, mother." She lifted the jewel to her lips, and turned a rose red. But her mother regarded her with dismay.

"Oh, daughter — it was n't — surely it could n't be —"

"No it wasn't, and it could n't be — any one but just this one who put it here. Guess, mother, who is there in all the world thee would be willing I should accept this from?" But the mother was silent. Then Elizabeth knelt beside her chair. "Put thy hand on my head, mother, love me, tell me thee is glad, mother. I can't wait for thee to guess,

thee is so slow. It was Nathanael. He came to me on the mountain top, just as the sun rose, and all these years, since he was a boy, mother, he has been loving me and waiting to give me this. He is waiting now to see thee, mother. We will breakfast together. Thee must be famished."

Then her mother kissed her. "I am glad for thy happiness, Elizabeth. So thy father loved me. Bring me my crutch; we will go down to him."

So they came to Nathanael where he paced up and down, and he was satisfied with the mother's welcome.

"Ah, Nathanael," she said, as he helped her to the table, "I have often longed for a son like thee."

So it was that after much discussion Nathanael had his way. He did not have to go back to Denver alone. They returned to Los Angeles and there were quietly married. Elizabeth was not asked to leave her mother, she could not have done that, nor did Mrs. Drew plead to return that summer to their New England home. She was quite content.

One day before they left, as Nathanael was standing in his hotel reading-room he saw a man regarding him intently through the window. The man was unkempt and haggard, and he gazed at Nathanael with hungry eyes, but turned when he saw himself noticed, and walked away. His face was thin and pallid, his manner that of a fugitive. Although Nathanael caught but this momentary glimpse, and although he had no time to spare, as they were leaving within the hour, he seized his hat and walked rapidly after the retreating figure. Something in the man's eyes brought his brother before him, his brother from whom he had heard nothing for over a year.

Nathanael saw him glance about him as he turned a corner half a block ahead, and hastening his steps arrived at the corner in time to see the man disappear through the open door of a drinking hall. Then he was half minded to turn back. His brother Jack — his handsome, self-reliant brother, could never be transformed into a man with such a slinking, hangdog gait. If he followed him into the hole, what excuse had he to offer, if the man were a stranger — as he must be. Yet those eyes! He changed his hurried pace to a saunter and, passing the hall, gazed in at the door and saw the fellow standing at the counter waiting for his drink. No — that never could be Jack. Just then the man turned, and their eyes met. In an instant Nathanael was at his side.

"Jack!" he said, in a low voice, and the man's glance fell, but his hand instinctively sought Nathanael's. At that moment the liquor was set before him, but Nathanael saw he had already been drinking. "Leave it, Jack, and come with me," he said, tossing the money for it beside the glass, and they passed out. As Jack set foot in the street, he glanced quickly up and down as if afraid of being watched.

"Let us find some quiet place where we can have a chat, old boy," said Nathanael. "We'll go in this restaurant and have a bite to eat while we talk."

They entered a small eating room and chose a table in a corner by themselves. Nathanael sent for a messenger boy, and dispatched him with a line to Elizabeth, telling her they would be detained a day longer in Los Angeles. Then he turned again to his brother. "Now, Jack, you've had trouble; tell me about it. Why haven't you let me know?"

Jack sat with his head drooped forward and his eyes staring at the tablecloth. He cleared his throat and glanced uneasily toward the door. "Have they been tracking me?" he asked hoarsely.

"What do you mean — tracking you?"

"You ought to know — they don't keep things so quiet in Woodbury Center." He took a sip of water, and again cleared his throat. "Did n't you know I killed a man before I left? Whom did they suspect, if not me?" His eyes now sought his brother's face pathetically, and again looked past him to the street.

"Ah," said Nathanael, gently. "I see it all. But lift up your head, boy, and be a man once more, for he's alive and well, or was a few weeks ago. Here's a letter from him."

Jack started up and stretched out both hands to his brother, then he dropped back in his chair and bowed his head in his arms upon the table, and his shoulders shook. The long year of agony and remorse had broken his spirit. Nathanael waited a few moments, then he touched his brother's hair lightly, as a woman would have done. "It's as I tell you, Jack. You have suffered, poor fellow, but you can hold your head up like a man again. That's right — look the world squarely in the face, and begin all over."

The ice crust of reserve that had always been between the two brothers melted away, and they talked together freely and intimately.

"I have n't looked a man in the face from that day to this without fearing he might be searching for me to pay for my crime. Oh, God! It would be better to die than to be haunted by such a memory. That man as he lay

there after I struck him! I have seen him all the time. I meant to kill him, I had murder in my heart, but after the blow was struck, I would have lain there in his place to bring him to life again. I covered his face with his coat, so the sun should n't shine on it." He hid his face again with his hands, and they sat for a moment in silence.

At last Nathanael spoke quietly. "Put it all behind you. You have suffered, I know, but it was right you should. You have no money?" Jack spread out his hands with a gesture of despair. "But that's not so bad. I can help you out."

"You have done it before and got nothing in return."

"I have my brother back, and once again we'll trust. Have you anything to do?"

"No, naturally. I've been wandering about, picking up odd jobs in out-of-the-way places — hiding, Nat, hiding."

"Here comes our lunch. Look me in the face as you used to do. The fear is gone, and you'll go back with me — or rather, before me, for I must stop on the way. I can send you on, and the company will give you work."

Jack's face flushed. "If I go on there, I shall in reality be indebted to him — to the man I struck?"

"Yes," said Nathanael, impellingly, "but you must accept that. You can't afford to let pride stand in your way now."

"I have suffered, and have repented, but he — he did me a wrong, and I have n't forgotten."

"I think you mistake there."

"You don't understand."

"I think I do."

"He has told you?"

"He made no complaint of you to any living being. How could I have been ignorant of it otherwise?"

Jack looked down and sullenly cut at his steak. "He knows he wronged me," he said. "You are married to the girl you have loved all your life. I saw you together yesterday. You looked happy, and so did she. I went by the hotel again to-day, hoping to get another glimpse of you. See what he did for me. I am an outcast. I have committed a crime, and my life is broken."

"You are young and have your life still before you. As to whether you were wronged or not, leave it for time to decide. You will be on your feet again soon with us —"

"And then I'll meet him as a man should, and settle the matter. Has he married her?" Jack spoke huskily, and leaned forward, looking eagerly in his brother's face.

"No."

"Then I'll go with you."

CHAPTER XXVI

JOYFUL'S NEW HOME

Behold, in the rose of the dawn, Love,
In the round, red disk of the sun, Love,
I see thee before me, my one Love,
I see thee when daylight is gone, dear,
In the bending bow of the moon, clear
That riseth faint and soon, dear —
In the lingering star at its tip, near
Even as lip to lip, dear,
From dawning to dusk my heart holds thee,
From dusk to the dawning enfolds thee,
Turn hither thy feet for thou knowest it, sweet.

As the 1st of June drew near, Mark Thorn grew more eager and restless. He could not let Joyful sail away from him, and went again to Boston and followed the clew Tom Bings had given him, only to learn that the family had already gone to New York, and were to sail on a Cunard steamship. In haste he returned and made preparations for departure. The sittings for Hester Prynne were finished, and he had begun one or two other subjects, using Marie Vaile still as his model. Now he told her he must stop work for a time and take a vacation.

Two or three days were yet to elapse before the sailing of the steamer on which he found the Burt family registered, and these he passed in jubilant anticipation, working in his studio until the last hour.

The day before he left he had been selecting some of his

studies and placing them in such order that at any time he could send for them, and among others he took out the unfinished Undine. This he sat long before, while he lived over again the moments he had passed with Joyful, and as he sat thus absorbed in that summer dream, Marie Vaile entered and stood beside him, unheeded. When she spoke to him, he started, almost as if he were guilty of some secret he wished to keep hidden, and turned the picture to the wall.

"Oh, Mr. Thorn, don't put it away. May I not see it?"

"Indeed, yes, if you wish," he said. "It is an unfinished thing, as you see." He placed it before her and gave her his seat, while he stood beside her. He wondered if she would recognize the likeness to the child she had once so generously befriended, but he was little prepared for the depth of her passion. She was silent. Then he placed before her the crayon sketch he had begun in the Somers' boarding house, and which he had since finished with exceeding care. This he had always kept for himself alone, and Marie's eyes were the first he had ever allowed the privilege of resting on it.

"This is a better likeness, and more finished," he said. Still she was silent, as though stunned. Suddenly she rose and turned on him like a tigress. He was amazed at her vehemence.

"You — you!" she cried, seizing him by the arms. "It was you who took her away. Tell me, where have you hidden her, where are you keeping her? I want her. I will have her. I say I will know — You shall not have her — no man shall see her — I want her. Tell me." As suddenly she released him, pushing him violently from her. Her beautiful lips curled contemptuously, and her eyes flashed

defiance in his. "I had almost persuaded myself there was one good man on earth, who could be trusted, and I came back to ask your help — to tell you all about it — where she came to me — all. I thought that cat had her concealed, but it was you — you who took her away and hid her." She sank again into the chair and covered her face, weeping passionately.

Mark looked down at her, filled with tenderness and sympathy. He was so overjoyed at the thought of soon having Joyful near him that he could not resent her words, and he sat near her and talked to her quietly until her passion had somewhat subsided. Then he told her of his first meeting with Joyful, and of his love for the child, and his struggle with himself. He went on and told her how he had found her the second time, and what he had done, and how he had lost her, and had sought for her week after week, not wishing to make his search known so as to trouble her. He told of his sorrow and chagrin when the rude awakening came to Joyful from which he would have saved her forever, and at last he told her how he hoped he had found her again, and had planned to sail away in the same boat with her.

As Mark told his tale, gradually Marie's sobs ceased, and at last she lifted her head and looked at him, listening eagerly. Her lips were feverish and her cheeks flushed, and her fingers trembled as she pushed back the heavy hair from her brow. Her hands seemed to have grown thinner and more transparent in the four months since she had been his model, and he was filled with compassion as he watched her.

For a time after he had finished speaking she sat with her hands tightly closed in her lap, silent, and her face assumed the hard expression he had sometimes seen her wear. Once

she moistened her lips and essayed to speak, but uttered no sound. He waited quietly, not interrupting her mood, and at last she spoke out of the pain in her heart, so low he could scarcely understand her words.

"You are a good man," she said coldly, as if her sense of justice forced the admission from her. "Perhaps you will forgive me for misjudging you. You will take her away from me forever. If you ever return with her, I shall not see her, for I shall be dead. I would have saved her from the knowledge of — also, if only I could have found her, but now it would be too late. If ever she sees me again, she will hate me for what I have been. Those who are so terribly good always do."

"You are mistaken, Miss Vaile. She understands well that you were generously protecting her. If you could have seen her as I saw her, weeping and pleading to stay with you — to take you with her — you would understand, but — but — that, as you know, was impossible."

"Yes, I know," she replied, scarcely above a whisper, her lips only forming the words, and Mark continued.

"I promised her I would find you, but when I returned you had gone, and she had lost herself from me, and I could not have told her about you had I had anything to tell. No doubt she distrusts me still, but when I have won her I will bring her back, and you will find her loving and full of gratitude to you. Believe me, Miss Vaile."

But he could not dispel her sadness. "No, I shall be dead. I shall have nothing to live for, to make me care to live. I thought if I could have her, I — I would have sufficient incentive to — to —"

"I understand, Marie; I understand."

"I thought I could atone through her — I could keep her with me, always safe and happy."

"But what could you do?"

The marble of her brow became crimson, and then paled. "You have a right to ask. I have a little money, Mr. Thorn, left me by my father. They all thought me dead, only my father. He would not believe it, and charged them never to give up the search until I was found, and a few months ago they found me. It is n't much, but it would almost keep us, and for the rest — but I give up. It is of no use to struggle now." She rose and walked toward the door. Mark followed her, expostulating — trying to draw her out of her deep despondency.

"When I return I will need you again, Miss Vaile. Let me keep my promise to Joyful. I told her I would bring her word of you. Here, this is my address in Paris; write me there, and when I have married Joyful —"

"You speak very confidently, Mr. Thorn." Marie turned on him with the ghost of a smile about her lips. "Sinless women are hard. It is we who have suffered who understand — who can be tender. You may not be able to win her, for distrust is a very devil in a woman's heart."

"Ah, but I will win her," he said quietly. "Sooner or later, I will."

"You cannot know what your taking her away from me means to me — and yet I hope you may. I hope she will understand — sometimes happiness is just within our reach, and we never know it — and live on without it. I suppose — I feel — that you are a good man. — They are rare. Good-bye." She passed out, but still he followed her, and thrust the card with his address in her hand.

"Write to me. Promise me you will write to me there, for Joyful's sake."

"If it is possible — if — I will," she said.

The next day Mark sailed. Glad at heart, jubilant, he paced the deck, waiting for a sight of Joyful's face. She must surely be there, somewhere among the crowd thronging that great palace of the ocean, for there were the names on the steamer's passenger list in his hand — Mr. George Burt, wife, three children, and governess. He waited patiently all the first afternoon, but saw no one whom he thought could be of the family. Indeed, but few children were to be seen, and they were not of the ages of those he had seen with Joyful on that spring day. The next morning Mark saw a golden-haired little boy playing about the ladies' saloon, and ventured to make friends with him; but when he asked his name, the prompt reply was "Willie Jones, but you must call me Will." Alas! He was the only small boy on the ship. Then Mark interrogated the captain, and learned, to his chagrin that, owing to the sudden illness of their little son, Mr. and Mrs. Burt had given up their passage only an hour before the boat left the harbor, and returned to Boston.

Surely the fates were against him. The pilot boat had gone back, and there was no chance of his return until the steamer arrived in port; moreover, he had business which would take him to Paris, possibly to Italy — a commission to select certain paintings for a public gallery in a Western town. Rashly he had promised to do this, and now felt under obligations to the committee who had chosen him their agent. Torn between anxiety and duty, his restlessness knew no bounds. He became moody, and appeared

to his fellow passengers morose, to such an extent that he was avoided as one who might prove to be anything but a pleasant companion.

At last he decided to write to Marie Vaile, and beg her to find Joyful for him, telling her he would defray the expenses, and that none must be spared. He gave her the address of the house near Boston, where he had reason to believe she might be. He told her to go to Tom Bings, to make friends with his wife — to do anything that would lead her to Joyful. This letter he dispatched in port, and then set himself with all speed to fill his commission, which furnished him with occupation that might have been pleasantly distracting, had it not been for the frequent delays he was subjected to by the dealers.

During the months that had elapsed since Joyful Heatherby wrote the tear-blurred letter which had become ragged and frayed in Mark's breast pocket, she had been filling a difficult position bravely. She had been learning the ways of the world, that is to say, and had bowed her young head to many a sore trial.

Mrs. George Starr Burt was a handsome woman, and wise in her own conceit. She felt that there was no height to which she was not entitled to climb in the social world, which world, in conservative Boston, was slow in taking her to its bosom, mainly for the reason that the members of the highest circle, or of any other, for the matter of that, knew nothing of her antecedents. She had been sent to the city from a small Western town to be cultured and finished, and while there had met and married a man several years her senior, whom her father had generously established in a business which, without such aid, stood on the edge of

failure, and had since that time been rapidly amassing a fortune.

Now Mrs. Burt felt that, with a fine physique and all the culture to be had for money, and wealth to command, she ought to be gladly welcomed and placed in any position to which she might aspire; hence she shook out her beautiful plumage and fluttered about to sun herself in the light of the public gaze, but found it decidedly cold. She made occasional flights in the Delphic groves where the tree of knowledge is supposed to flourish best — she preened her feathers at the feet of celebrities — she joined classes for the study of Dante in the Italian, or for peering microscopically into the mysteries of Browning and Walt Whitman. Not that she cared in the least what their lines might mean, but that they were to her lines of introduction to the joys of social supremacy.

Mrs. Burt was a determined woman. What she did not have she seemed to have, and if rebuffs were given her, she did not know it, or the rest of the world did not know she knew it. For several years she had been slowly working her way toward the position she desired to occupy, but the way was long, and at last she resolved to make a few bold strokes to win. Why should she wait until she was old and gray? Younger women than she were admired and deferred to — their positions unquestioned and secure, why should not hers be? Was it her quiet, absorbed husband who stood in the path? Must she always go about alone and work her way unaided, while he was never to be seen except in his office or at his own table? Other women's husbands went out with them, semi-occasionally, at least. Other men could hold their own in conversation — some of

them were even brilliant, and their wives were sought after for their sakes — they were connoisseurs of wines — they had experiences to relate and could please women — they could cover deficiencies and say the right thing at the right instant.

George Burt could do none of these things. Did he happen to be caught at an unwary moment and allow his wife to accept for him an invitation to dine, he was silent for the most part and monosyllabic between courses, and the lady at his side must needs support the conversation for two. He always felt his wife's eyes on him, and the consciousness of her dissatisfaction permeated his behavior. As the genie who kept her purse filled with gold, he was useful to her, but beyond this he was a drag on her progress, to be apologized for and held in the background to serve in silence.

Before Mrs. Burt had acquired an establishment, she had busied herself in making a wide circle of acquaintances whom she called friends. She was willing to ride any hobby to the death which would carry her up the hill she was eager to climb, hence she mounted many and rode them bravely until they collapsed under her weight, leaving her on the road, far short of the goal. She began in a modest way with her church, and rode the missionary hobby in the excellent company of mature women whose social position had been an established fact from their cradles; but for some reason invitations to missionary teas did not lead gradually to invitations to bridge whist and full-dress affairs. She progressed through all the gradations of women's activities, from severest forms of self-culture to public charities, until at last her patient husband could give her an elegant mansion in an elegant quarter, with an elegant

retinue of servants in elegant livery, when she began to ride in elegant equipages with elegant companions who were willing to be carried about.

It was at this time that Mrs. George Starr Burt decided she must have a French governess for the three children who had come to her very quietly and had, thus far, not been greatly in her way, being so small as to be entirely under the care of a nurse. Now Mrs. Burt, although she had much means at her disposal, was inclined to be extremely thrifty withal, and economical in small things. Albeit a large and imposing woman, who appeared to do things in a large way, her servants knew they could not expect large wages, and they also knew that their full quota of labor would be exacted from them to the smallest detail. While she was lavish in her expenditure for the garniture of the bodies of her three babes, she was cautious when it came to laying out money on their mental furnishing; hence, in her search for a French governess, she was anxious to find one who could at the same time save the expense of an extra maid, and whose expectations in the way of salary would be, to say the least, modest. Thus when the janitor's wife learned that the elegant Mrs. George Starr Burt wished for a French governess, and brought Joyful into her presence, that astute woman quickly perceived her opportunity to obtain much for little.

Joyful's inexperience, and the fact that she was not born in France (a fact greatly to her disadvantage) made it quite a charity, indeed, to give her the position at all, no matter how small the stipend. That her name was Antoinette, however, was fortunate. Mademoiselle Antoinette sounded well, and, suitably gowned, she would give quite the air Mrs.

Burt desired as she drove about with the children, or brought them to the parlor to be noticed and petted by injudicious callers. Thus was Joyful installed a member of the Burt household. She became Mam'selle Antoinette, and was enjoined to speak nothing but French to the children. Her salary was given her at first in the form of gowns and hats, such as Mrs. Burt thought to be suitable for a French governess, and to all appearances her only duties consisted in driving with the little ones, accompanying them as they strolled in the park, taking them to dancing school and children's parties, and submitting with patience to their selfish whims and caprices; but with all this, duties were imposed on her which should rightly have been performed by an underservant, and she was frequently pressed into service as lady's maid for Mrs. Burt, who considered that, since Joyful's duties were so light, she might just as well learn to wait on her, and keep her dresses in order.

Many a night after the children were asleep and her legitimate tasks were done, and she should have had the hours to herself, she might be found in the laundry sorting and folding garments, pressing filmy ruffles and picking out the laces that adorned elaborate frocks, or removing grass stains from small trousers, or perhaps she would be ironing Mrs. Burt's fine handkerchiefs, or mending her husband's socks and underwear. In "Mam'selle's" workbasket might be found Mrs. Burt's silken hose, placed there as a compliment to "Mam'selle's" handiwork; or indeed, table napery to be darned. Thus were her grandmother's lessons in old-fashioned needlework brought into daily use, and when seamstresses were in the house making the children's clothing, many an hour which should have been her

own was spent by Joyful in making buttonholes or hem-stitching ruffles.

There were regular hours to be spent in the schoolroom, of course, but they were constantly interrupted or shortened that Joyful might have time for these tasks. She never had a half hour for quiet reading, and the dreams of knights and ladies became visions of her childhood, dim and far away.

Sometimes in the dead of night she awoke and longed for the sea, and fancied she heard its monotonous wave beats on the shore when a midnight car rumbled in the distance. Often her pillow was wet with her tears when the long wakeful hours pressed on her the memory of all she had lost, and she hungered for a little love, for the sight of the dear old grandfather's wrinkled face, or the sound of her grandmother's voice. Often she dreamed she was seated at Elizabeth Drew's knee practicing her guitar, and awoke with a sense of loneliness like a cold hand over her heart. Sometimes, in the darkness, she saw Mark Thorn as he had first appeared to her, standing in the wagon way through the woods, or as he lay with his bandages about him in her grandmother's best chamber — his eyes, burning under his heavy brows, fixed on her, his dark hair matted above his white forehead, and his thin, pale, unshaven face looking ghostly after his hurt. She saw him as he was in each hour she had spent in his presence — in the boat, busied with his sketchbook and pencil — in Elizabeth's home, painting her "Ladye Faire" — in the wood under the branching beech tree with patches of sunlight dancing over him. The very tones of his voice seemed still to vibrate in her ears, even to quiver in her heart — his gentleness when he asked her concerning her trouble — every word he had said, and

she would turn her face to the wall and sob silently and in shame, that she could not forget. Must she always remember and feel him near her? Why must his words repeat themselves over and over? "Again you are right, Miss Joyful," and why should her heart always ache with the memory of them? Must she always long thus to see him, and hear him speak to her again? Then would come the thought of that night when he had taken her away from that strange and horrible place, and she would writhe in an agony of shame and sorrow. Ah, it was a sin to so hold him always in her heart. What had Mrs. Bings told her? Who was he? A wandering artist, a man who was a law unto himself — who had no moral sense — who had deceived her and who would continue to deceive her as long as she had anything to do with him — whose "power was the serpent's" and whose influence was to destroy, and yet — and yet — how could it all be? Oh, those monsters to fight! Could he, with whom she had talked about them, be only one of them, and had he thus begun his betrayal of her confidence? How could it all be when her grandmother had received him into her home and cared for him like a son, and Mrs. Drew and Elizabeth had liked him — and yet — there had been strange reports of him which had somehow spread abroad from the house of Somers. Why had he been attacked? What had he done? Was it something dishonorable that he could not explain? So she questioned and answered with herself, and questioned again.

Why should Mrs. Bings so solemnly warn her that he was a sinful man, from the heart out? It did not show in his face nor in his words — but Mrs. Bings had told her that was something men learned who lived in the world to

which he belonged — they learned to cover the evil in their hearts so cleverly that none could see it. Mrs. Bings had shuddered to think what would have been Joyful's fate had she not hidden her away in a safe place, and Joyful was truly grateful to that good woman for her interest and kindness, and for placing her in the way of independence. Yet, even if it were a sin not to do so, she could not follow her advice and hate Mark Thorn — even if he were so bad, she could not — she must just hide from him until she ceased to long to see him. She must hide. So kindly and gently he had comforted and helped her, how could she forget!

These lonely midnight hours were the only moments Joyful ever had to herself, when the fair little boy was sleeping in his small bed near hers, and the two little girls had ceased to fret at and torment each other while slumbering in the nursery, which opened off from Joyful's room. She did not even have the night to herself, for they were always with her. Fortunately, she had a natural love for children, and much tact, and it was not long before she had so won these three lawless little beings, whom she found thrown entirely in her care, as to hold them usually under control.

The two little girls became rivals for her affection, and crowded and pushed each other about for the seat nearest her, for the first kiss in the morning, and the last embrace at night, until she found it necessary to bestow her favors alternately, treating each with perfect fairness. But for the little boy, who was younger and frailer than his sisters, she cherished a peculiar fondness. He was sensitive and gentle, clinging to her hand when they walked out, and when he played by her side his eyes constantly sought her responsive glance. He loved to have her sing to him, to hold her guitar and

gently pick the strings. This was his greatest delight, his comfort after bumps, his reward for taking his medicine, or for bravely eating his porridge at breakfast, a food his mother insisted on giving him, and which the poor child loathed.

The children saw little of their mother, and less of their father, except on Sundays, when he usually took them out in the morning. They had their dinner with their parents on that day, and it was then only that Mr. Burt ever saw Joyful, or even awakened to a knowledge of her existence as a member of his household. But gradually he became aware that his children were becoming attractive — that there was less wrangling and noise, and occasionally, instead of going down to his office and sitting there, as being more at home than in his own house of a Sunday afternoon, he dropped into the nursery and spent the hours with his little son in a pleasant contentment new to him. He would lie on the floor watching Harry build cars and block railway stations, giving him a helping hand now and then, and listening to Joyful read Hans Andersen's "Fairy Tales" to the little girls.

It was about this time that Mrs. Burt decided she must make a few bold strokes for position. She filled her house with guests. Occasionally she would exploit an artist or musician who was willing to be taken up, at her dinners and musicales. She gave Browning afternoons and Emerson breakfasts for the literary set, and theater parties and late suppers for the gayer crowd. Since it was difficult to drag her husband into these social functions, she was frequently obliged to do without his presence entirely, substituting therefor the services of a tame cat — one of those interesting

beings whose sex is determined by their costume, and who poses and purrs contentedly at a married woman's elbow, under the stroke of her caressing hand.

On these occasions, Joyful was pressed into constant service. She was always tastefully dressed and expected to be present whenever there was any demand made for the children. Although the labor of a servant was exacted from her, that fact was never admitted, and she was always known among guests and acquaintances as "Mam'selle Antoinette." Thus the days and weeks passed until the time when Mrs. Burt decided that the family must make a trip abroad. Everyone else went abroad, and she imagined that after a year spent on the continent, she would be able to return and begin over again at the point she was at present unable to reach.

CHAPTER XXVII

OVERTAXED

"Awake, aspire
To immortality ; heed not the lyre
Of the enchantress, nor her poppy-song ;
But in the stillness of the summer calm,
Tremble for what is Godlike in thy being.
Listen awhile, and thou shalt hear the psalm
Of victory sung by creatures past thy seeing."

—GEORGE MACDONALD, LL.D.

BEING thwarted in her purpose by the illness of her little son, Mrs. Burt decided one course only was left her. She would not open her house, but take a cottage at Newport for the season. There she could gather people about her and perhaps accomplish more than her other plan would secure for her. While arrangements were being made for this change, they went to a hotel, with the sick child under Joyful's care, but the family physician promptly interfered, and insisted on having Harry removed to a hospital where he could have scientific nursing and perfect quiet. But even so, the little fellow grew rapidly worse. His trouble was an obscure one, seemingly an affection of the brain, and after his removal he was never calm a moment, but wept and called continually for Mam'selle Antoinette, until at last the physician sent for her, and a place was provided where she could be near him night and day. With the tyranny of love he clung to her, giving her no rest. His great eyes followed her hungrily when she went out, and

watched unceasingly for her return. When she was with him, his mind seemed at peace, and he rested contentedly, — a condition which brought rapid improvement; but when she was called away by Mrs. Burt for other affairs, the child drooped and failed, apparently losing all he had gained.

"If you wish your child to recover," said the physician to Mrs. Burt one day, "I would advise you to allow Mademoiselle to remain with him. Don't take her away for anything, except with my consent."

"Oh, Doctor," wailed that lady, "everything — everything shall be done for Harry that money can do."

"But my dear Madam, it is not a question of money. He needs the alchemy — of a loving heart. His trouble is of the brain, and he must suffer no longing, no irritation. Grant him anything he desires. If it is Mademoiselle, — very simple, — let him have her."

"Of course, yet she has duties here, also. The little girls must not be neglected, you know, and we go to Newport just as soon as Harry is well enough to be moved."

"Oh, you do!" exclaimed the doctor, with some relief. "Well, why not go without waiting? Leave him where he is and allow Mademoiselle to remain with him."

"Oh, Doctor — you know a mother's heart."

"Yes — I know," he said, coldly.

"And here I am ready to go to him at any time."

"Of course, of course; and when he demands you, go. He's a delicate instrument, delicately strung. Make the tension too great, and he is gone. Let him have what he craves; give him his heart's content. Unless he calls for you, the child will be just as well off if the family is in Newport instead of here."

"That girl seems to have bewitched him," said the mother, fretfully.

"Best thing for him. Let him have her undisturbed, and you go to Newport, and when he is well enough, take him out there for change of air."

Having the doctor's advice to sustain her, Mrs. Burt, the little girls, and a retinue of servants went to the cottage at Newport, the father remaining at the hotel and burying himself in his business, more silent and taciturn than ever. Sometimes he would go to his family for a Sunday, but usually in his vacant hours he haunted the hospital where his little boy lay. He brought him flowers and toys, and often was rewarded by the sight of the frail child's pleasure, as the little fellow would smile up at him and let his small hand lie passive in his father's large one. These were the only moments when Joyful was allowed to escape for a short walk in the air.

"It is contrary to all rule to have an untrained girl, an outsider, here doing these things," said the head nurse to the doctor, one day. "It's my opinion that child should be made to obey."

"State your case, state your case," said the doctor, curtly. "What harm is being done?"

"Only the breaking of the rules of the hospital."

"It's a question of the boy's life or your rules, hey? Save the child and damn the rules, then."

"Very well, sir," said the nurse, turning away.

Harry would take his food from no one else. If Joyful were not there, he would not eat. No other hand might bathe his fevered limbs. She must not leave his room at night. If one of the nurses took the cot at his side during

his sleep, to give Joyful a chance for an uninterrupted rest, he would waken, and his screams, as if of fright, would soon bring her back to him. Thus it came about that only when he lay with his hand in his father's, could she have any change. Mr. Burt noticed at last that Joyful was growing paler and thinner.

"How much are you getting for all this?" he asked abruptly one day, as he looked in her weary eyes.

"I have my salary," she replied, in some surprise.

"Yes, yes. But how much?"

"I have fifteen dollars a month."

"What?" he said, rising suddenly, and towering over her.

"And Mrs. Burt has given me help about my clothing," she continued. "I have n't had to pay so much for it as if——" but he waited to hear no more, and stamped out of the room with a muttered oath.

"Papa, you did n't say good-bye to me," wailed Harry.

He returned quickly to the boy's bedside and bent tenderly over him.

"Good-bye, Harry, boy. You must get well, so father won't have to say good-bye. Father wants you to grow up to be a man and help him."

"Perhaps I will," said the child, holding his father's bearded face close to his cheek. Then he released him and went off into one of his sudden sleeps. His father stood a few moments sadly looking down on him; then turning to Joyful he said:—

"You are being worn out. We must do something about it."

"Oh, no. Harry is all I have to love now, Mr. Burt. I would love him well again if I could. I am glad, glad he

wants me." They spoke in low tones, and Mr. Burt tiptoed softly away. The next day Joyful received a check from him for a hundred dollars. "Put it away. You may need it sometime," he said in his note.

These early weeks of summer dragged slowly, until at last definite improvement in Harry's condition began, which showed first in a request to see his little sisters, and later he was removed to the sea, and a quiet corner of the cottage was devoted to him and Joyful, after which for a time his improvement became more rapid. Yet when he should have been able to run about and play in the sand with the rest, he seemed to have lost the full control of his little limbs, and had to be carried in the arms, or wheeled in his chair. Then Mr. Burt gave up all work in town, and devoted his time entirely to his little son, and then the roses came faintly back into Joyful's cheeks.

During these days there were gay doings in the Burt cottage at Newport. Mrs. Burt felt that at last she had gained a point, and become the leader of a set. She had given up the intellectual cult, and her intimates were among the gayest frequenters of the gay resort. Her wines were of the best, and the conventional restraints of Boston were thrown off. Young men haunted her house and hovered about her sideboard; night was turned into day, and high play at cards was the rule; merriment reigned supreme, and everything was free. There excursions were planned and theatricals rehearsed. In these last, Joyful's services were often required to help fashion costumes or arrange scenes. She was the more helpful for her wide reading of romance and active imagination. Had she not been living plays all her life until during the last year? Sometimes she was given a part,

when needed to help out, and this she greatly enjoyed. Soon she began to be noticed by the frequenters of the house, who felt the charm of her bright, innocent quaintness, as of a rare wild flower in their midst, and it pleased them to test her originality, until she came to be in constant demand, and it was "Mademoiselle Antoinette" here and "Mademoiselle Antoinette" there. Sometimes the ways and manners of these people astonished her greatly, and often, utterly weary of everything, she slipped away from them all to Harry's room and hid her head in sadness, longing for her old home and the old simple life and love, by the sea.

Oh, how she longed to see Elizabeth, and to hear the sweet, high-bred voice of Mrs. Drew! One day a bright idea struck her. She wrote to the little post-office at Woodbury Center, asking if there were any letters for her. Why had she never thought of that before? Letters from Elizabeth, three of them, came to light, each succeeding letter more anxious than the one preceding and the last telling of her marriage and happiness, and ending: "Now, Joyful, neglect me no longer. I am troubled that I do not hear from you. Whatever you are doing, or wherever you are, if this reaches you, I am sure you will write to your old friend." Then Joyful wrote for the first time, giving the details of the loss of her grandparents, and saying simply that as she knew she could not remain alone in the little home, with no means of support, she was now living with a Boston family, and had the care of their little son who was very ill. She gave Elizabeth the address at Newport, and this was sent in Nathanael's next letter to Mark Thorn, and followed him from New York to Paris, then to Rome, then

to Florence, and from there back to Rome, until it was many weeks old before he received it.

Gladly would Mark have taken the earliest steamer for home, but he was delayed most vexatiously, having to go to Paris again, and then to London before all his commissions were satisfactorily filled. Five long weeks had elapsed since he had heard from Marie Vaile, and then only that the Burts were not in Boston. At a venture he wrote her again, addressing her as before, but not knowing whether her restless spirit had taken her elsewhere. He knew of no one but Marie to whom to trust the search without subjecting Joyful to unpleasant consequences, but he determined to do nothing after his return until he had found her.

In the meantime, summer waned, and Harry had so far recovered that the plan to go abroad was again broached, and their return to Boston hastened on that account; but no sooner were they at home than his condition again began to cause anxiety. One evening as he lay in Joyful's arms listening for the hundredth time to the story of "Kay and little Cerda, and the Snow Queen," he lifted his head from her shoulder and looked steadfastly in her eyes.

"Mam'selle Antoinette, do people ever get slivers of that glass in their eyes, really and truly?" he asked. "Did mamma ever?"

"It is not really a sliver of glass, Harry. It means something else."

"What does it mean?"

"It means something that gets in their hearts, making them hard and cold, caring only for themselves."

"What does mamma care most for in her heart?"

Joyful drew him closer in her arms. "I don't know, Harry dear; let's finish the story now, shall we?"

He cuddled down and was quiet, but presently he spoke again, dreamily. "I know what papa loves most in his heart. He loves money best of all, and me next. Does n't he?"

"Oh, Harry, Harry, darling! He loves you more, far more than his money."

"But he spends all his time getting money, and only sees me a little."

"The money is all for you and your little sisters, Harry; and it is your father's work to get it. Men must attend to their work, but he would give all his money in a minute if it would only make his little boy well again."

"Yes. When will he come? My hands are cold. I want him to hold them."

Then Joyful called his small sister Cora May from the adjoining room. "Go tell your father Harry wishes to see him, dear. He must be at home by this time."

"Sing," he murmured, laying his head heavily on her shoulder again, and Joyful sang softly Schubert's air of "The Wanderer," while she rocked him in her arms and thought of Elizabeth. Presently Mr. Burt entered and stood looking down at them. He gently took Harry's hand. The child's fingers were cold and did not close around his own as usual. Suddenly he stooped and gently lifted his boy in his arms and held him clasped to his breast. "My God!" he whispered. The child slowly opened his eyes and looked in his father's face, drew a long, sighing breath as of contentment, and was gone.

After that moment came a sudden and terrible reaction

for Joyful. Her strength had been so long taxed to the uttermost, under conditions unnatural to her, that she suffered from a species of nervous collapse, which took a morbid turn, partly induced by the reproaches of Harry's mother. Why had she not mentioned more particularly Harry's condition so that measures might have been taken to save him? Why had she been silent? No doubt he would be living now and on the road to complete recovery had some prompt remedy been administered. It was undoubtedly the crisis he was passing through, and would have been the turning point for the better had something only been done at the moment. Mam'selle, having been with him all the time, should have been able to judge by his symptoms what his condition was, but to sit and calmly let him die in her arms—what was she thinking of! All these and many more bitter complaints reached her ears, but still Mrs. Burt had no idea of allowing her to go when she asked to be released from her position, and so Joyful stayed on, drooping from day to day, until at last the physician, attending one of the little girls for some slight ailment, noticed her condition, and called Mrs. Burt's attention to it. He ordered peremptorily that she be taken to the hospital for restoration, where Harry had been.

"She'll be all right in a few weeks, if you do as I say. If not, she'll die," he said roughly. "Take your choice."

Thus it came about that while the summer still lingered into the early fall and the days were oppressive with heat, Joyful was taken to the same cool white room where Harry had been so carefully tended by her, and there was put to bed and gently nursed, even as he had been.

"You have something on your mind," the doctor said to her abruptly one day. "What is it? A lover?"

"Oh, no, Doctor." She looked steadily in his eyes as they keenly searched her face, but she grew a shade paler.

"Out with it, out with it, come," he said, as he drew a chair near the bed.

"I can't, Doctor; I have n't anything to out with." She smiled wanly. "I had one lover once, but I did not love him. He was not a true knight, only a boy grown up."

"Not a true knight? What do you mean?"

A little fluttering sigh escaped her, and closing her eyes she placed her folded hands under her cheek. "Nothing but dreams, Doctor. I used to read about the knights and ladies of the olden days, and I used to think I would sometime have a lover, and would love him, a true knight, who would achieve some great, good thing." She opened her eyes again and gazed in his face, which had grown very kindly and tender. "Of course that was very long ago. I understand many things now that I did n't know then. I have grown old since that time."

"Tut, tut, tut," he laughed loudly.

"Yes, it is true. I have lived so much in so short a while."

"Tell me," he said kindly, "all you have done since you left your home. Why did you leave it? Where did you go?"

"I lost my grandparents, and I had to go to — earn my living. Oh, I can't talk about it now, Doctor."

"You can't tell me anything?" he said, still more gently.

"You see, Mademoiselle Antoinette, if there is, or has been, anything troubling you, and I can remove the cause, you will get well much faster. You are young and ought to be

gay and light-hearted. A sad heart saps the vitality, or a heart with an unsatisfied hunger in it."

"Doctor, tell me truly, was it my fault Harry died? I would rather have died myself. I had no one else to love, and — now I have no one at all."

"Thunder, no!" The doctor rose, and paced angrily up and down the room. "He could n't have lived. No power on earth could have saved him. It was a blessing he died when he did, poor little chap." He sat beside her again, and took one hand from beneath her cheek and held it, patting it softly. "I have a little girl at home just about your age, but she's a gay one. Why did you ask that question, Mademoiselle?"

"Mrs. Burt thought that if I had been more observant and prompt, that —"

"She's a fool."

Joyful took her hand away and placed it under her cheek again. "It will help me to get well to know I could n't have done anything." Then she added after a pause, "And it helps me also, your being so kind." She did not like to take her hand from his, yet she felt abashed at the caress. Nevertheless, his gentle sympathy comforted her.

"Is that your trouble, then? Is it all you have on your mind?"

"Yes — no — I can't say — I have n't any one to get well for, and it is hard to try. I really think I don't care. If it is n't wicked to feel so — I think I would rather lie still and — go out. They are all gone — the ones I loved." She lay sadly silent, and the doctor sat pondering. She must be roused to care for her life, or she would "go out," even as she said. He pulled at his mustache — took a

cigar from his pocket case, then struck a match, but forgot to light it. Suddenly he became illuminated with the central light of her nature. "If it is n't wicked to feel so —" That was the point on which to touch.

"Yes, it is wicked to feel so — it's damned wicked!" he burst out with startling emphasis. "I — ahem! — Have you done anything in particular yet to feel that you have a right to let go? Every one has some business in the world, or — or — he wouldn't have been put in it — Ahem —" He felt himself to be running aground in his theology, for, like old Chaucer's "Physician," "His study was but litil in the bibil." Joyful raised herself, and looked at the doctor intently, and he, with assumed ministerial gravity, returned the gaze. Like a true physician, he must follow any line that led to healing, and he reiterated, "Yes, it is damned wicked to feel so, you know —" He realized that his phrase was hardly the scriptural one, but nothing better suggested itself. "You're too young to have finished all your work. There's plenty to do — plenty to do. You don't know — why, somebody may be needing you this very minute — may be passing this building now who needs you. Oh, I own it's easier to shut your eyes and drop out of the world, but you have no right to do that at your age — you must find out what you were put here for first — Ahem!"

"I think I understand what you mean. Even weak and sick people have their monsters to fight. Perhaps it is just the desire to die and leave their work undone that coils around their hearts, and makes them cold and faint."

"That's it, by Heaven! You'll work it out."

"I think I know some one — that may — perhaps — need me, but I have lost her."

"Ah, that's right. Get well and find her." He rose and moved restlessly about, and spoke again, as if to himself. "Damn it, that's the right tack." Then he came back and stood a moment looking down into her clear eyes. "Good-bye. You get well, right straight, and then you find her. To die would be a sin, a terrible sin." He took her hand again from under her chin and, stooping, touched it with his lips, and strode rapidly away, muttering, "Damn it."

The fumes of his cigar came back to her as he lighted it just outside the door. It reminded her of Mark Thorn, and a pang shot through her heart. She quivered from head to foot and, covering her face with her hands, cowered in the pillow and sobbed. But it was a saving sorrow, after all. She wanted to live, if only to see him once more.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AN AMBITIOUS WOMAN'S HUSBAND

"There dwelt sweet love and constant chastity,
Unspotted faith, and comely womanhood,
Regard of honor, and mild modesty ;
There virtue reigns as queen in loyal throne,
And giveth laws alone,
The which the base affections do obey,
And yield their services unto her will ;
Nor thought of thing uncomely ever may
Thereto approach, to tempt her mind to ill."

—EPITHALAMUM.

FROM that day Joyful gained in strength. After all, she was young and buoyant, and the thought the doctor had given took possession of her poetic soul and made her restoration to health an imperative duty. Some one might be needing her — might be waiting for her recovery. She began speculating as to whom it might be. Was it any one she had known, or was a new person to come into her life? Surely something yet awaited her out in the great world; was she not still young, not even twenty? And once again, although with maturer mind, she saw visions and dreamed dreams, and the horizon of her future glowed warmly enticing, through their dim and roseate haze. Who was waiting for her? Might it be Marie Vaile? They could go back to the little cottage in the cove and live there happily together, and do something to earn money, —

raise flowers, or keep bees; indeed, there were many things they could do, and be so safe and happy. She could make butter. Mr. Thorn had told her he liked her butter, and he — her heart seemed to lose a beat at the sudden thought — what if he might be the one who needed her! But that — that could never be — never — never. It made her sad that, however her thoughts might wander, they inevitably came back to him. How could a man seem right and beautiful and yet be so evil that even to think of him was wrong? Mrs. Bings had told her she had no doubt that all Marie's wrongdoing might be traced back to him, and had not that beautiful Mrs. Stevens who sold flowers at the Hospital charity fête told Mrs. Burt she had seen a woman as beautiful as a dream posing for him in his studio, an English girl? It might have been Marie, and there could be no other Mr. Thorn who was also an artist. She must believe it, and when such sadness and wreck had been brought about by him, she was filled with chagrin that she could still think of him and long for him. What a wrong heart she must have that she could not shut it against him and hate him!

Resolutely she turned her thoughts away from him and questioned what she should do next. The Burt family were to sail in a few days, and she was to be left behind. Mrs. Burt had never sent to inquire whether the little Mademoiselle who had almost given her life for her son was living or dead. Mr. Burt had been several times to ask after her, and had sent her flowers now and then, but, being a silent man, had spoken of her to no one.

On the last Sunday afternoon before their departure he called for Joyful and asked if she were not well enough to

be taken for a drive. The air was dry and the day one of those sweet September echoes of summer. Yes, the nurse was glad to have her out for a time, but he must not fatigue her; so she was dressed and walked languidly out, and was helped to a seat by Mr. Burt's side. He was fond of a fine team and always drove himself, and being of a conservative nature he had resisted thus far his wife's entreaties to purchase an automobile.

"I don't care for them," he would say; "they are new-fangled and noisy, and they have a bad smell."

The horses were easy travelers and swift, and until they were out on the quieter streets Mr. Burt gave himself to the pleasure of driving them, with no apparent heed to his companion, while Joyful lay back against the cushions and yielded herself to the delicious pleasure of the moment. She let the troublesome thought of what she should do next slip away from her, and listened in silence to the rhythmic beat of the horses' feet, and drew in deep breaths of the sweet air. The warm sunlight glowed over everything, and showers of yellow leaves were falling with every lightest wind that stirred the trees. She felt she would like to ride on like this forever, if the wind were always soft and the sun warm, and care would only leave her and let her rest so.

Presently Mr. Burt turned and looked at her. "Nice day," he remarked.

"Yes. It is so good of you to take me out. What made you think of it?"

"Nothing else to do — Harry gone, you gone, house lonely — spent the morning in the office and then determined to come after you. Good idea."

"The house isn't usually lonely on Sunday, is it?"

"Oh, no. Usual crowd there. She has something going on this evening, I guess — looked like it." Joyful gave a little sigh. She was thinking of the utter loneliness and incongruity of this man's life. "Tired?" he asked.

"Oh, no. I am so happy to be out once more, I was thinking a moment ago I would love to go on like this forever."

"You can, if you want to, you know."

She laughed a gay little laugh. "Yes, if the world would only stand still, and the sun would shine always, and the horses never tire, and the night would never come."

"I suppose you would n't think, now, of coming back, would you? I'll take you with us, just say the word."

"Oh, I could n't, I could n't!" she cried, quite without thought; but she recoiled from the idea of living longer in the home which had never seemed a home in the sense the word meant to her, and which, since Harry's death, had been unbearable. "I could n't, indeed, Mr. Burt; I'm sorry."

"Guess you 'd better come."

"The little girls don't need me. When Mrs. Burt is in France, she can find a governess who can teach them much better than I can, one who won't be tempted to speak English to them."

"I don't care about their French nonsense. She can have them taught Chocktaw, if she wants to. I only care to keep you in the house. You 'll be better off than knocking about, and — by George! I want you there. With Harry gone, and you gone — it's — What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. The nurse who showed me how to take care of Harry thinks she can find me something to do, and — I have the money you gave me still untouched. You have been most kind to me, Mr. Burt." Her eyes filled

with tears, and he saw them, and his big, tender heart was touched. He muttered an oath between his teeth. He knew very well what he would like to do, and had been revolving the scheme in his mind for some time, trying to make it seem the only right thing, and when he saw the tears he decided to try his plan, come what might.

"I've a mind to throw up my hand," he said. "I don't hold any cards worth while, as it is, and I might as well." He paused, and Joyful looked in his face and was silent. "I've spent all my life in getting money, and I've worked hard — well — I've got it, no denying that, all I need, and enough for her to spend, I guess. I'm thinking I won't sail with her next Monday — that is, if you choose not to come back. She can take her share of the money and go, if she wants to. She has n't made the home much of a place for me, as I can see." He paused and glanced at Joyful. She was still silent and regarded him gravely. Then he continued, as if he were not so much addressing her as talking to himself audibly. "Damn! I should say she has n't. Her way of running things does n't count me in any farther than to keep her pocket-book filled. I'll just fill it for her once for all and let her go — if you'll —"

"But, Mr. Burt! Don't do that! Go with them — for the sake of the children. Everything will be different over there, and you will find so much abroad to interest yourself and them. You are n't even acquainted with your own little girls, I believe."

"I know my own children better than you think, Mam'selle; those two youngsters will grow up to be just like their — I'll find as much pleasure in them as I would in a green parrot and a cockatoo. No, Mam'selle, since you

came to us I've learned a thing or two as well as the children. I've learned what sort of a place my home is, and what it might have been. I'm not middle-aged yet, and I'm old and gray — and yet — and yet — I've a right to a little happiness in this world, and I'll get it, by George, I will!" He had spoken slowly and hesitatingly, and now he paused again. He had lived his life so immersed in his business that he did not know how to talk, and he removed his hat and wiped his brow, and then gathered up the reins, as if nerving himself to a supreme effort. Joyful felt a tremor of anxiety that was almost fear pass through her. Why should he tell all this to her? Ought she to let him do so? She thought not, and yet she could not rebuke him. He had been so good to her all this year, so considerate and kind, was it for this she had made herself live, to go back and do what she could to make that home — no, no — it was not he who needed her — it could not be he.

"I think, Mr. Burt," she said, at last, "you would better take me back to the hospital. It's very lovely out of doors, but —"

"Tired? I thought you said you would like to drive on like this forever. I said you could, and I meant it. See here, Mam'selle, I'm going to take a long vacation and go somewhere. Where shall it be? Wherever you say, we'll go. There is n't a thing on earth you want that you sha'n't have. I've thought this all out — I've looked into the customs of that crowd she had around her there at Newport, and if she wants to train with that set and be a leader among them, by George, I'll follow. You and I, we'll be the most moral couple of the whole lot. There are the Bermudas, we might have a little establishment there, or

in the West Indies, or we could go to Japan, you and I, and you — why, I'd keep you like the Queen of Sheba (she was the one who had everything on earth, was n't she?). You may think I'm too old to be any companion for a girl like you, but never you fear, I'll turn the whole world upside down, but I'll do it. I'll make you happy."

During this speech, Joyful sat as one stunned. Twice she essayed to speak, but could find no voice. Then Mrs. Bings was right, no one was to be trusted who had wealth. Men thought their money gave them a right to do anything they pleased. She looked pityingly at the man at her side, and yet as she looked she recoiled from him in fear and anguish.

"I think, Mr. Burt, I would like to go home," she found voice to say, at last, but he appeared not to hear the low murmur, and went doggedly on, looking straight ahead of him, and speaking through closed teeth.

"I guess I know right from wrong as well as anybody, and if it is n't right for me to take a little girl and make her happy — I don't see that the ideas I got at church when I was a boy play much of a part in high society. It's a sort of a big game of 'Follow my leader' they're all playing, and whoever gets to be leader takes his own gait and follows his own whim, and as far as I can see the fellow who spends the most money wins. That's the game she's playing now. It's the game she's been trying to play ever since I've known her, and I've been fool enough to back her and sit dumb while she swings ahead and drops me out. I've given her the reins and the whip hand and now all I can do is to give her enough to last her (if she's clever, and I know she is), and let her drive to the devil if she has a mind to, and I'll cut loose. I'll take you and we'll —"

"Mr. Burt." Joyful leaned forward and put her hand on his. He turned and looked at her suddenly, as if awakened from a vision. "Please take me back now, I --- I am tired."

"Yes, Mam'selle, yes. I tell you there is n't a thing on earth you might ask of me I would n't do for you."

"Then I have a thing I would like you to do for me, Mr. Burt, if that is true. I will tell you what it is after a little. May we go back now?"

He turned about immediately and allowed the team to pace slowly, while they sat in silence.

At last he spoke. "Can't you tell me now what you'd like me to do for you?"

"I will try. I'm afraid I shall lose my power to trust, and --- I am already losing it --- and I want you to help me get it back. If I can trust no one, I would wish to die. Do you understand me?" With a woman's intuition and a child's wisdom she was searching his face and probing his spirit. He did not reply, and perceiving his inability to comprehend the workings of her mind, she went on hurriedly, "Before I learned what really is in the world, I did not know what a blessed thing it is to have friends whom I might dare to trust. One by one those I loved and trusted have been taken from me, and by their loss I know what a terrible thing it is to be able to have faith in no one." She paused a moment, but still he did not speak, and she continued slowly, "For a young woman to have no one on earth into whose eyes she can look and say, 'This man is good; I may believe in him,' Mr. Burt, it is terrible, and life turns from a joy to a horror and a fear." Still he was silent. "I had faith in you yesterday --- I respected you,

and now — now — I ask this of you. Make it possible for me to trust you and respect you to-morrow." He cleared his throat as if he would speak, but again said nothing. "I think you understand me, Mr. Burt. I want you to drop this day, this hour, out of your life as if it had never been, and I will drop it out of mine. I know I understand you; your life has been drained drop by drop of the gladness it might have had —"

"That's it — that's it, by George; I'll make —"

"But," she talked steadily on, "I suppose there never was a time in any life when there was only one course, one way to do; for if there is a wrong way there must also be a right, or the other would not be wrong. Do you know one of your little girls has many of Harry's traits? You will find her a great comfort, if you only try. You think you are acquainted with your own children, but really, I think you are not. Take Cora May into your heart in Harry's place. You don't know what you might do with them, if you cared for them a little. Then, Mr. Burt, I can always look up to you, and have faith in you. I can feel that you are my friend, a true one. That is what I need most."

"You can that," he said hoarsely, and they spoke no more until they reached the hospital. Then he lifted her gently down and held her hand a moment in his, but as he looked at her his eyes seemed not to see her, and she knew they saw with inner vision his little son.

"Love those who are left," she said. "It seems cruel for a father not to love his own."

As she turned from him he caught her by the sleeve with shaking hand, and this time he looked into her eyes, not

past her. "See here, little girl — Mam'selle, I suppose there's nothing — I suppose money could n't make you say any — thing different?"

"No, Mr. Burt, I can't explain — if you could look into my heart you would understand. There is something we can't see nor touch that lives in each one of us, it is not the brain we think with, it's — it's — what we love with, and money can't buy it nor measure it, and with our hands we can't catch it nor hold it any more than we can this sunlight; and yet it is just as real as the sunlight, and when it goes away from us, the money and the hands that held the money mean nothing to it. You can't buy and sell it any more than you could buy or sell your love for Harry, or his for you. It would be more possible for me to jump from a high precipice into a black sea, than do for money what you ask."

"I believe you," he said, and turned heavily away.

CHAPTER XXIX

MARIE VAILE'S RELEASE

I saw one stand
Holding 'the keys of hell and death' in either hand ;
His countenance
Glowed with a light mysterious and soft, his glance
Made luminous all space.
When from my dungeon deep I cried, He turned His face
And smiled on me,
And said, 'Be comforted. These be the keys of love to set thee free.'

AFTER a weary, feverish night Joyful rose and tried to feel herself strong enough to go out a little. She could not linger a day longer than she must, because of the expense entailed, and the necessity of being occupied pressed upon her; but with the exertion of dressing and moving about her small room she knew herself to be too weak to walk out, so she sat by her window and gazed down into the street, watching the passing vehicles. Her thoughts recurred to the drive of the day before, and she was filled with sadness and a haunting sense of shame. All night she had tossed and fretted under the burden of this shame, as the words George Burt had spoken came back to her. She had sought to excuse them as the words of a disheartened, sorrowful man, trying to wrest a little happiness out of life for himself at whatever cost, yet her supersensitive conscience punished her with the thought that this very desire to excuse him degraded her the more. She tormented herself by imagin-

ing some wrong in her own nature that she could not hate him for what he had proposed to her, instead of pitying and longing to trust him still. What was the trouble? Was her purity of heart becoming undermined by all she had seen and learned since she had left her safe little haven? It must be so. There was Mr. Thorn whom she dared not see again; why? Because her heart ached with longing to see him. And there was poor Marie Vaile who had done so wrongly, and whom she had seen stretched in drunken, disgraceful sleep, and yet she loved her, and would fly to her, if only she knew where to seek for her.

Suddenly her thoughts were arrested by what was transpiring in the street below. An automobile had stopped before the hospital, and a man was lifting from it a young woman who seemed to have been hurt, and another lady, troubled and frightened, was trying to assist him, who ran on before to summon help, as he carried his apparently unconscious burden in. Joyful grew paler, and grasped the window ledge for support, as she watched them. Then, as she still stood clinging, quivering and white, she heard the swish of silken skirts outside her door and a woman's voice speaking rapidly and with suppressed excitement, and she knew they were taking the wounded young woman into the vacant room opposite her own.

For an instant her heart beat madly. It was Marie. She was sure it was Marie Vaile who was hurt. Then she forced herself into calmness and walked quietly into the hall. The door of the room stood open, and the gentleman who had carried the young woman in stood just outside, leaning against the wall. He looked very white and ill. A nurse was passing, and seeing his face drawn as if in pain,

paused to ask if he was hurt also. Joyful heard him say, "No, not exactly." A moment later the nurse brought him a glass of wine, and he walked slowly to the end of the hall and sat down.

Within the room a nurse was gently removing the patient's jacket. She took scissors and cut away the sleeve and opened the shoulder seams. The beautifully dressed lady stood near, twisting her delicate handkerchief into shreds. Now and then she touched away with it the tears which brimmed her eyes.

"Oh, will she live, will she live?" she murmured again and again.

"We cannot tell, Mrs. Stevens. The doctor will be here immediately. There, she is coming to herself," said the nurse, as the patient moaned. All this time Joyful stood in the doorway, fascinated — unheeded. The lady brushed past her and spoke to the gentleman without. "She may live, Scott; she is becoming conscious now. We can learn who she is and take word to her friends — that much we can do." She returned quickly and stood again at the bedside. Slowly the sufferer opened her eyes and gazed at the open doorway and suddenly, with glad recognition illuminating her face, she cried out, —

"Joyful, come to me, come," and in an instant Joyful was bending over her, kissing her lips and holding her face in both her hands.

"Don't excite yourself, Mam'selle Antoinette, and don't excite her," said the nurse. "I think you can't do anything now, Mrs. Stevens. We will find out all we can about her, and in an hour or so you might send round."

Then the lady swept out, and Joyful heard her speaking.

"We are to inquire in an hour, Scott, and learn all about her. She is recovering a little. She spoke to that young girl who stood in the doorway; and, Scott, we must dismiss that chauffeur right away. Why, Scott, dear! The shock has made you very ill. Come out in the air. There is such an odor of anæsthetics here, no wonder," and her voice died away down the corridor.

Joyful heard as in a dream. Far back in her memory the name Scott Stevens seemed to come to her, hovering in a mist of anguish and horror. Where had she heard it or seen it? Scott Stevens — Scott Stevens — and through it she heard Marie faintly imploring to be allowed to speak to her, and begging the nurse not to send her away.

"Mam'selle's nerves are not strong; she has been very ill," said the nurse; "I don't know if she can stand it."

Marie's eyes sought Joyful's imploringly. "Must I lose you again? Oh, I'm afraid, I'm afraid!" she moaned.

"You will never lose me again, Marie, never, never. I have been getting well on purpose to find you." Marie smiled, and the smile faded as she relapsed into unconsciousness. Then the doctor came, and the nurse bade Joyful go.

For hours Marie remained for the most part under the influence of opiates, and when Joyful was allowed to see her again, she lay white, and only her eyes seemed to be alive. Her poor crushed body was bound about so that she could move neither hand nor foot.

"Will she live?" Joyful had asked the nurse, and the reply was, "It is to be hoped not."

During her moments of consciousness, Joyful was allowed to remain with her. Louise Stevens, full of concern and

pity, came every day, and was lavish in her gifts of flowers and in her expressions of sorrow, and her indignation at the carelessness of their chauffeur.

"No one could be more unhappy over this than my husband," she said. "He has been really ill over it, and has parted with his machine, and says he never will ride in one again. It is so hard on him."

Marie gazed steadily in her eyes as she spoke, and then said faintly: "Tell him — tell your — husband to enjoy his machine again, for it has done me a kindness. Tell him this is Marie Vaile's message to him."

After Louise was gone, Marie begged Joyful to come close to her side, and Joyful knelt by the bed and laid her cheek against Marie's.

"I wish to talk to you for a few moments, and you must not interrupt me, for in a very little while the effects of what they have given me will pass, and the awful craving will drive me mad again. It is worse than the pain I suffer. I would rather be crushed, and ground to powder than to be denied my opiate. Joyful, do you really in your heart — do you honestly believe in a God — a good God? Don't lie to me."

"Oh, yes, yes, Marie."

"You wanted to pray to God once in my room."

"Yes."

"Did you?"

"Yes, Marie."

"What came of it?" Joyful was silent. "What did you ask for?"

"I only asked to know what was right to do."

"What happened?"

"Some one came, some one whom I knew, and took me away." Joyful faltered.

"Well, you were taken care of, it seems. Did you pray for me?"

"Oh, yes, Marie. Always, always!"

"What did you ask for me?"

"I wanted you, Marie, I wanted to find you."

"Yes? So that prayer seems to have been answered, also. You have me again, for a few days, and then — who knows where I shall be? I don't care, so long as I can be out of the hell I have been in for the last year. I might as well be in one hell as another. Listen." Slowly she closed her lids, and slowly opened them again, and Joyful lifted her head, and they looked in each other's eyes. "The chauffeur was not to blame for crushing me. I did it myself. Don't tremble with the horror of it. Don't mind. God does n't care what we do so much as you think. I was getting off the car, and all at once I saw them coming, and I did n't care, I stood there and looked at him, and let it come on me. Why should I care? My heart, my soul had been crushed long before. I dropped where I was, and in an instant he had finished his work. Never mind, dear, never mind — you don't need to understand. My father was a minister. He believed in God and the devil. Don't interrupt me, dear — he had to — it was his profession, but — whatever he believed, he loved me, and wherever he is, I shall not be with him — if what he believed is true. I — I have sinned, and I shall be in some horrible place set apart for such as I, for oh, I have sinned! I have sinned! — He will wait for me — if it is true — and watch for me, and I can never go to him. That is what is breaking my

heart. Why do you believe in a God, Joyful? How can you when He permits men and women to be cruel to each other, to lie and to hate, and to crush each other's hearts out? I would weep, only I wept all my tears long ago. If I were a God, I would weep for the poor creatures I had created and then left to their own destruction. Oh, I have loved and I have hated — How I have hated! and I can't tell you which has brought me the most pain. I hated — but it is past, and it would do no good to say whom, only I was even afraid if there is a God I should hate Him, so, now that I am to go, there is no hope for me. I shall be in one place and my beautiful old father in another. He believed in a heaven and a hell. I and the man who made me sin in one place, and my father in another; if father was right, that is the way it will be."

"You must not talk so. I know some words, Marie, that make me think it will not be so. Listen — 'I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore and have the keys of hell and of death.'"

"What does that mean to you, Joyful?"

"I think it means that while we can't understand, yet we can trust, for Christ has the keys, the keys that will liberate. I never think that any one is to be forever in one place; everything moves and changes, and things are transformed — they die and come to life again. I believe even more in spirit than I do in body, Marie. You see what I mean; here is your beautiful body lying all crushed and torn, and you, oh, Marie! You have got to leave it here, and when you have left it, it must be laid away, but you, you, dear, that which shines now in your face, the cruel wheels could not touch it. The you that looks into my eyes, that

is real, as real as God. You see God must be, or there would be no you to live, to love me, to go out of what lies here on this bed and leave it to its fate. Listen, Marie. Do you truly love me? Is your love real? Then, Marie, it can't be this crushed, hurt thing that lies here that loves me; there is something that is going out of it that loves me; it is the you that looks out of your eyes into mine. Love can't exist without a source, and this you that is loving me so will go and find God. Just as your love draws my heart to you, so His love will draw yours to Him. No matter what you have done, He will know the love in you and you will find God. Oh, I know, Marie; I am not afraid of God, I never have been."

For a few moments Joyful knelt sobbing beside her, and then Marie said gently: "I will try to believe you, little pink rose, I will try. The pink is gone from your cheeks now, but some day it will come back. Yes, I must try. At any rate I shall know soon. Dear, the craving is coming on again, and I must finish what I have to say. Not long ago I inherited a little money from my father. I have made a will and left it to you. It is n't much, but it will keep you safe, with what you earn, and if the time ever comes when you don't need it, I have told in my will what I wish done with it. It is to be used for sad — sad girls — who think there is no hope. There, Joyful — there, darling, send the nurse to me — send the nurse. I can't stand this any longer. They won't give it to me — I tell you they must." Her voice rose to a scream, and the nurse came quickly. "You would better leave her now, Mademoiselle," she said, bending over Marie and trying to soothe her. "Yes, yes. Very soon, Miss Vaile; be patient a little longer." She gave her some soothing drops.

"I say you must help me. This won't relieve me for more than a moment." She tried to lift her head, and her poor body quivered as with an ague. She struggled for mastery of herself, and the nurse knew she was in agony. Presently she became quiet and called again for Joyful.

"I didn't finish telling you, dear — I have something very important to tell you, but I can't grasp the thought long enough to get it said. Let me see — I made the will — yes — and then I — thought if I never saw you again — at least I had — had — but I meant to do this, not quite this, I meant to be killed outright — I — I wanted him to — finish his own work —"

Joyful saw she was becoming excited again, and laid a cool hand on her brow, and gently kissed her. "Don't try to talk about it now, Marie; I understand."

"No, you don't. There's something more I must say. There is some one who loves you — who — I wrote a letter and I put the will with it in a large envelope, and it happened just before I did this, I mailed it, but I could not mail it to you, dear, so I sent it to — I sent it — I did n't know where you were, so — dear Joyful," her voice trailed off in a whisper, and then new strength seemed to come to her, and she cried again for the nurse, and wailed and wept, and all she said became incoherent and disjointed, and Joyful was sent away.

"You can do nothing now, Mademoiselle. As soon as the doctor comes he will give her an opiate. That is what she wants, and she will only rave until she gets it," and Joyful went, weeping silently.

Soon the doctor came, and then the raving ceased, and in the morning Marie Vaile had departed. The body she had

willingly cast down to be crushed lay there, but she was gone. Then Joyful wept for her no more, because she believed, as she had said, more in spirit than in body. She could not weep, for He who held the keys of death had unlocked the portal of her life and set her free.

Louise Stevens came in as usual, and the flowers she brought were laid on the quiet breast. They were white lilies, for word had been brought her that Miss Vaile was dead. Louise had asked her husband to buy them for her, but he had answered, "No, dear, you get them, anything that seems to be appropriate," and Louise had chosen white lilies, and now she wept, as she stood beside the dead.

"She must have been very lovely once," she said; "and we — we killed her — Scott and I. He looks ten years older since it happened. He says he will never get over it."

"But it was not your fault," said Joyful, trying to comfort her.

"No, it was the fault of the chauffeur. Mr. Stevens dismissed him."

"It was no one's fault but — I know it was not the chauffeur's fault. She told me so." Joyful was very sorry for Louise in her grief, and yet could not tell her all, for Marie's sake.

"Well, it must have been some one's fault," said Louise, with her usual coherence, "and so we had to dismiss him. I believe I have seen Miss Vaile before, now that I see her face like this, so white. Yes, I remember where it was. She was in Mr. Thorn's studio. Mr. Stevens and I went there to select a picture, and it was there I saw her."

Joyful became suddenly rigid, and her face grew as white as the face of the dead; and Louise, unseeing, talked on.

"I remember, it was last spring, just before we were married, and Mr. Stevens was taken suddenly ill, and we left immediately, so I only had a glimpse of her face, but, as I see it now, I am sure it was she."

Then Louise turned and saw Joyful sway where she stood, and caught her in her arms, and called for the nurse. "It made her faint to look at it, and yet it is a lovely face," said Louise to the nurse, after Joyful had been taken to her room.

"They seemed to be very fond of each other," said the nurse.

"Oh, is that it?"

"And Mademoiselle has been very ill."

"Oh!" said Louise.

CHAPTER XXX

MRS. RENOLDS SOLVES THE MYSTERY

I'll go where flowers are brightest and birds sing
The year long. There my foolish heart I'll steep
In Lethian drafts of melody and spring.
I'll rest my spirit in a charmed sleep,
While hours, like passage birds on whirring wing,
Sweep by me, till I too may rise and pass,
And leave this clay to feed strong roots of grass.

WHEN Mark returned to his studio in New York, he found a note there from Marie Vaile. It had not been sent by post, but had been thrust under his door. She told him she thought she had found a clew at last, and had gone to follow it. She gave him an address in Boston, and closed with the hope that he had had a successful trip, and saying that he might go on with his work with good heart, for she would surely find Miss Heatherby, and if at any time she required assistance from him she would let him know. The note was short and seemed perfectly sane and businesslike, only that it bore no date. He turned it over and over, wondering when it had been written, and how long it had awaited him.

"Yours received," — then she had gotten his letter. He made rapid calculation: it might have lain there two months; but the janitor assured him it could not be so long, for he had cleaned the apartments only three weeks before, and not a scrap of paper was there then; so Mark did as the note suggested. He wrote Marie at the address

given, and took up his work again with what patience he could. He journeyed out to the Western town and personally superintended the placing of the pictures he had purchased for them; moreover, he sold some of his own best work, and returned encouraged and almost happy — happy but for the one consuming desire of his heart.

He went to see Mrs. Renolds, and found her just returned from her summer at Newport. His visit with her was animated. She had not seen him so exuberant since those old days in Paris. She told him much about Scott Stevens and Louise, and Van Burgh and his wife.

"Those men are both in love with their wives," she said; "they seem the exceptions to the rule nowadays. You can't wonder at Scott, however." Mrs. Renolds was sailing dangerously near the old sand bar. She watched Mark closely from under her veiling lashes, to change her tack the moment she saw the shadow of a cloud cross his face. If none came, she was safe to pursue her own vantage. "You know, I used to wonder at you sometimes, but I don't so much now, and I'm not surprised at his infatuation or love, or whatever you like to call it; for since her marriage Louise has given up her whimsies. She has really become quite a finished woman of the world, and has grown, if possible, more beautiful than ever. She was easily the most beautiful woman at Newport this summer, and a perfect hostess, — just what Scott would require, since he must stand first in everything to be content." Mrs. Renolds paused, and the tea was brought in. "Sugar, Mr. Thorn?" She held the lump suspended over his cup. He did not reply, except with a laugh, to which she responded merrily: "Of course, I remember. You heap a little mountain of sugar

in the middle of your cup, and pour the tea over it and make a kind of a luke-warm sirup. No other man of my acquaintance is so stupid. What have you there?"

With a dancing light in her eyes she watched him interestedly. He had taken a little box from his pocket and was carefully removing the tissue paper wrapping from some small object.

"I found this in Florence, by the merest accident. I did n't suppose a piece was in existence that had not been snapped up by the collectors." He placed in her hand a small oval of ancient enamel set in quaint gold, exquisitely wrought.

"Oh, Mr. Thorn. What a priceless treasure!"

"I know it to be genuine. I found it — but that's too long a story; I'll tell you some day how I found it — but I can vouch for it. I hovered about the place for days before I dared show any interest in it."

Mrs. Renolds' cheeks grew pink with enthusiasm. "How delightful!" she exclaimed, looking at him rather than at the treasure in her hand.

"Yes. The moment I saw it I thought of you, and determined to secure it. You are the only one of my acquaintance who would know really how to appreciate it. Luckily I succeeded, and you have it."

"But, Mr. Thorn — you did n't — you don't mean —"

"If you will be so good as to accept it."

"But, Mr. Thorn, I can't. It's a thing of too great value as an art treasure to take from you."

"Its value I have received from you long ago, Mrs. Renolds, with innumerable lumps of sugar." He dropped another piece in his cup, and laughed. "Sometimes these lumps,

when properly administered, go to sweeten life as well as tea," he added.

In silence she took the bit to the light, and stood examining it carefully. "And when you saw it you thought of me," she said at last in a low tone. "That is worth more than the enamel, Mr. Thorn." From where he sat in a dusky corner Mark looked up at her suddenly as if he had received a thrust. What had he done? Had he been blundering all this time? As she stood between him and the white light of the window—a dark, finely-cut silhouette—he could divine nothing from her face, and she continued: "To have you think that I can really appreciate a thing like this! It elevates one out of the common, and inflates one's pride. I do know its intrinsic value, but I really accept the gift for the thought, Mr. Thorn."

"You set too high a value on my judgment," he said gravely.

"Oh, well, we women love to be praised, and when a man compliments us on something in his own line, where he is supposed to know most, himself, you see the praise really counts." She sighed. "There is so much that doesn't count, no wonder I say what I value most is the thought. You are not going, surely."

"I must. I'm rather hurried. I go to Boston to-morrow." He stood a moment smiling down on her from his height. "You say you women love praise, but I can go you one better. We men love flattery, when it is so delicately administered that we do not recognize it as such."

This time it was he who silhouetted against the light. She could not read his face, and was left pondering his intent.

"Ah, we never flatter, Mr. Thorn," she called after him as he passed out.

Mark went back to his studio and sat long before the picture of Hester Prynne, and as he gazed he thought of Marie Vaile as she had stood that day when Scott Stevens and Louise visited him there. Poor Marie, he must hunt her up and learn what she had been doing. But Marie, even as he thought of her, was being borne away from the hospital with Louise Stevens' lilies lying on her breast, followed by one wide-eyed, grave little mourner, who yet did not mourn, but looked out at the world from her carriage window the more sadly that she need not mourn. Poor, blind humanity! Could Mark have looked at that moment into the little mourner's eyes, what joy would have been his.

Mark was in one of his most depressed moods. He seemed to be thinking in pictures that evening, many and varied, with always the central figure of the little maid in the evening light with her arms full of crab-apple blossoms. Now and then another figure interposed, the presence of Mrs. Renolds in her luxurious home, moving with gracious gentleness among the beautiful objects that surrounded her, and now he knew that if the little maid never was found, this woman of charm stood ready to offer consolation. He had never before grasped this thought, and he stood amazed at his own obtuseness. Pictorially she had always satisfied him. Her delicious femininity and subtle strength had often comforted him, and her worldly wisdom he had always considered a sufficient shield and barrier. Alas! he had never dreamed of finding it vulnerable.

Submerged in this psychological quandary, he began a

serious self-analysis which lasted far into the night, and in the course of which his spirit took a tremendous stride in wisdom. Other women, silent shadows, crept into his pictures and out again, and he saw the part women had played in the forming of his life. There was his mother, wide-browed, looking into his heart with gray eyes full of sympathy and love, and he felt as he used to feel when a boy, that he must be true with himself to stand unabashed before them. Then there was the reign of beauty, worshipful beauty bending down to him, coming near — always elusive — never yielding quite his heart's desire, filling his artist's sense, yet leaving him hungering for — he knew not what. Then, out in the world among a thousand unrealities, his little definite aunt who always knew when his heart was sore, with her healing touch that never probed too deep — all these who had ministered to some need in him, what had he ever done or given to merit such precious guerdon of love as they had brought into his life? All but one on whom he had lavished much, as it seemed, for naught but the lesson learned, that beauty alone may seem to be enough in life for a time, but can never last into eternity, nor travel with the soul and sustain it up to the mountain heights of joy. No; up to those heights only two loves seemed to have wings buoyant enough to fly weighted with the soul of a man: the mother-love that lifts him out of the mists of the valley, away from the greedy, reaching arms of the world, and that other love, the love beyond measure, of a woman, which lives with him still on to the very sunlit tops where the mountains touch the heavens. Now, as the pictures passed before him and he sat gazing, he knew, knew as well as if he held her hand and looked into her eyes, what woman's

soul could mount those heights with his, and her he had lost.

When the gray light of morning stole into his studio he rose, chilled and stiff, and turned the picture of Hester Prynne to the wall. He must go and find his love. He strode out. It was too early for any eating house to be open, and he went to his lodging. A deadly cold seemed to have penetrated to his very bones, and for a week he lay too ill to leave his room, haunted by the pictures of his long night's vigil in his studio.

When he was able to be about again, he found matters awaiting his attention; a dinner invitation from Mrs. Renolds, and several calls to social functions, none of which he could accept, chiefly because of a certain long envelope addressed in his care to Joyful Antoinette Heatherby, accompanied by a note from Marie sending him a document she wished him to place in Miss Heatherby's hands in case anything should happen to her before her search was finished. "I know you will be sure to find her sometime, even if I do not," the note ran. "I send you a copy of my will in which I am leaving what I have to her. It is not much, but it will keep her safe, and I believe you are a man whom I can trust."

The letter stirred in him a sense of foreboding. She had not been successful, then, and was despondent. He knew her well enough to fear for her when in those moods. He started without more delay, and reproached himself for his illness. There was no knowing what momentous thing might have happened during those days of inaction. He went first to the address Marie had given him, and learned there of her terrible fate. He had her belongings gathered together and properly stored, and placed the receipt for

them with the document Marie had sent him; then he began following up the clew given him in Nathanael's letter.

Calling at Mr. Burt's place of business, and learning that the family were abroad, he looked up the steamship's passenger list as before, but no governess was of the party. He learned from the caretaker at the home that the "Mam'selle" had been ill, and he went the rounds of the hospitals, in the vague hope that she might be the inmate of one of them, and here he was in a measure rewarded; but even so he could not learn where she had gone, nor with whom. The only nurse who knew was taking a vacation somewhere in Delaware. Disheartened and heavy-hearted he sought to find comfort and rest in his aunt's home, but the housekeeper informed him that Mr. and Mrs. Stevens had taken Mrs. Parsons with them on a yachting trip down the coast.

"I will never give up the search," he said in his heart, "as long as she is in the world. I will find her." As he mused on the problem one day, he bethought him that the will Marie had placed in his hands gave him a legal right to find Joyful without the danger of subjecting her to the annoyance he had so carefully avoided. He immediately placed the papers in the charge of his lawyer, telling him to leave no stone unturned until the document was delivered, and to keep him notified. Then he took up his work again with renewed energy. At last the hand of the law was stretched out to draw her to him, and he could with patience await the result. In the interim he would try to achieve something for her sake like a true knight.

During this time Mervain Thompson was growing impatient for his picture. He wrote scolding letters, and at last visited Mark in his studio, but when he saw the nearly

finished work, he ceased his tirade and took the young artist's hand.

"I won't say another word," he said. "Take your own time, but whatever you do, don't touch the figure of Hester Prynne. I say don't touch that face, I'll take the painting as it is, rather."

Mark laughed. "It's the old complaint. You won't trust me even when you praise me."

"But I tell you that face is inspired. You may not know it, but it is," cried the enthusiast.

"No, I'm not sure that it was inspired, but I have no wish to touch it again. I must finish more carefully some of the others, however. I'm not satisfied with Arthur Dimmesdale. I'll get it, though; and old Roger Chillingworth is only outlined, as yet."

"Well, leave it so. You don't need to do much more with him."

The painting was oblong, to fill the space Mr. Thompson had allotted him. On one side, raised a little above the heads of the crowd, stood Hester Prynne with the child, its hand thrust in the neck of her dress, and the scarlet letter revealed under the bare baby arm. Below her were the three old gossips wagging heads together, and the sweet-faced young matron, her own child sleeping in her arms, gazing up at Hester with sad, prophetic sympathy. In the background were soberly clad maidens shading their eyes with their hands, and staid, virtuous mothers and fathers with their children looking in their faces wonderingly, all gazing at Hester, some pointing, some leaning eagerly with chin thrust forward. Opposite her and slightly higher was the balcony where sat the governor and reverend old judges

in stern array, while leaning far over the balcony railing was Arthur Dimmesdale, pale and emaciated, with noble brow and exquisitely cut features, and tremulous mouth; his eyes fixed on hers so earnestly, so fearfully, and yet so pleadingly that the look passing between Hester and himself seemed almost to obliterate the rest of the picture. To the right, beneath the balcony, stood old Roger Chillingworth, intent, keen, and the only face in the whole waiting crowd that was turned, not toward Hester Prynne, but toward the young minister.

As Mark stood before it, his face grew clouded. He was thinking of Marie and her fate, and through all his being he hungered for Joyful. Mervain Thompson looked up in the young artist's face quizzically.

"Come down out of the clouds," he said. "What's the matter with it? Great Scott! I believe you're not satisfied with it, and I'm going to send for it to-day. I'll rescue that painting."

"That's a little fiction of yours, Thompson. I'm a sane man. It's only geniuses, great geniuses, who are so erratic."

"I shall send for that picture to-day," said the little man, stamping energetically about the studio. "If you wish to do anything more to it, you'll have to come to the house and do it after it is up."

"Very well," said Mark, indulgently. "Take it when you please. Will you allow me to enter it for exhibit here in New York this winter?"

"Gladly," said Thompson, relenting. He did not send for it that day, and Mark was allowed to finish it at his leisure. Later it was placed on exhibit, and he had the

pleasure of refusing twice the sum he had asked for it, saying it was already sold. When Mr. Thompson learned of this, he used language stronger than his wont, and went to Mark, expressing his regret.

"If I had that man's millions, I'd make it up to you," he said. But Mark laughed. "No, you have only the brains in that big head of yours, he has the money; but all his money could not equal what you gave me long ago when you thought you saw some merit in my work. When you gave me the mural painting to do in your music room, men and women were passing my pictures by without a second glance. I had returned from Paris, that Mecca of artists, full of hope and enthusiasm, only to learn that to hail from any point this side of the Atlantic was death to an artist's career — that he must exile himself from his own land in order that the parvenus over here might import their art treasures from Europe — that art fundamentally meant nothing to them. The man who offered me double your price for this picture knows nothing about art; he would place it among a lot of senseless bargains — by Jove! and then boast of the price he gave — but there! The less said, the better. Some day he will come to me, and I'll sell him a picture and be glad to pocket the money, no doubt. We artists may storm, but after all we must live by such."

He laughed, but not so bitterly as he used to smile when he thought of his reception in the past. No; Fortune seemed to be turning her wheel in his favor, and he was stimulated to greater effort, and began one or two more serious pieces. Now and then he would work on the paintings of Undine. These he loved to linger over, and always when he was most

hopeful he would place the head he had shown Marie where his eyes could rest on it whenever he looked up.

As he sat thus absorbed in his private corner one afternoon Mrs. Renolds entered with a party of friends, and, according to their wont, seeing the artist at work, they prowled in the rest of the apartment as they pleased, turning pictures about and setting them in different lights at their will, and chatting, criticizing, and laughing. Mrs. Renolds often accompanied a chosen few thus, and now she proceeded, as had been her custom of late, to make tea and set out his stale biscuits, which she found in a littered little cupboard over the tea table.

"Mr. Thorn," she called at last, "your Sèvres is a dream, but I must say your cupboard is a nightmare, and where is the alcohol?" She brought him the little silver can. "Come, put away your work and find it for me. This is empty." As she approached him, she saw the pastel of Joyful placed where it was not to be seen from the larger room, and at the same moment she caught the glance he bestowed on it as he turned toward her.

"Oh, Mr. Thorn, why have you never exhibited this? It is the most charming thing you ever did. Is it an ideal?" She spoke in lowered tone, and her exclamation was unheeded by the friends who had treated themselves to a portfolio of sketches. "No," said Mark, placing it in a better light, "it is a portrait."

"When did you do it? Where did you find such a witching child, or is it a young woman?"

"Both," he replied, with a smile. "I did it last summer in the wilds." He turned it hastily to the wall, and went to fill the silver can.

"Where is she now?" she asked.

"I would be glad to know, but I haven't the slightest idea," he said most truthfully.

"It's so elusive. Let me see it again sometime, will you?" She studied his face, and particularly his mouth, as she spoke.

"I will, indeed, some day," he replied, and addressed himself to the others, while searching for the alcohol. "This is what comes of allowing your room to be set to rights. Sometimes it is a gem of art that is missing, sometimes it is the fuel."

"Is that what makes the biscuits stale, also?" queried Mrs. Renolds, testing one between her perfect teeth.

"Stale? Who dares call my cakes stale? I got them only a week ago. If you wanted them fresh, why didn't you come then?" He turned to her quietly. "These are abominable," he said; "while you make the tea I'll run out and get some fresh ones, and if you search in that cupboard a little further, you'll find some really good jam — to be recommended."

Then it was that Mrs. Renolds deliberately yielded to a temptation. Her woman's intuition told her she had stumbled into one of the secret chambers of a man's heart, and since the door seemed, perhaps only accidentally, to be closed against her, she wanted to know more. She was to be pardoned, for she cared much and she did not know whether to still keep the door to her own secret chamber closed, the door she had set ajar for him. Quickly she glanced at her friends. They were still examining the sketches and exclaiming over them. Then she went boldly to the work corner, and turned the canvas about. She knelt before it and eagerly scanned the face, only for a moment, as she might the face of a rival, then she rose and

walked slowly backward, gazing at it. "Ah," she said, at last, "this is what it means." Then she turned the face again to the wall and strolled back to the tea table.

When Mark returned, the small kettle was singing gayly, the friends were having a lively altercation over the merits of a certain picture, and Mrs. Renolds was thoughtfully measuring the tea.

"I want this to be exactly right," she said, smiling up at Mark, as he gave her the biscuits, "because I sha'n't have the pleasure of making tea here again for — nor you the pleasure of drinking it of my making, incidentally — for — oh, for months."

"Oh, Mrs. Renolds! What do you mean?" burst from a chorus of voices.

"I'm going to spend the winter in Florence."

"And you've just remodeled your lovely home! And all the jolliest things coming on! How can you?" came the chorus again.

"Easily enough. I'm sick of the great lonely place — and in Florence I shall have friends — also — and sunshine, and flowers — plenty of them."

Mark said nothing. He sauntered back and stood a moment studying the picture on his easel on which he had been working when they entered. Incidentally he noticed that the portrait of Joyful was set at a different angle to the wall than he had left it, and being fussy about how his canvases should stand, he replaced it and returned to take the cup from Mrs. Renolds' hand.

"I don't wonder you prefer Florence to New York," he said, smiling as their eyes met.

"I most certainly do," she replied.

CHAPTER XXXI

SURRENDER

"For love is lord of truth and loyalty,
Lifting himself out of the lowly dust,
On golden plumes, up to the highest sky."

"HOPE deferred maketh the heart sick," said Mark to himself. Searching in the box he carried on his sketching tours, for a tube of color, he had come upon a little withered violet that he had dropped in among his brushes on a certain summer's day, when he had been living an idyll and thinking that, in a manner, he was being — or trying to be — the arbiter of a young girl's fate.

He took up the frail atom, and smiled sadly as he laid it carefully on a bit of white paper where its summer's tints showed faintly through the withered brown, even as Joyful's words repeated themselves, and her thought glowed within him after these many months. "Everything has beauty — this has — but a soul must be more than just beauty, or Undine would have been enough without it." He touched the little flower with his finger, and moved it about on the paper. "Yes, wise little maid," he said, "a soul is more than beauty, for this is what beauty alone comes to, and a soul — her soul — is beauty — deathless — elusive — not to be grasped nor chained — a beauty to be felt and hungered for; it is hers and her God's to be bestowed, not claimed nor seized."

He unlocked a hidden drawer in an antique cabinet and took from it a tiny gold box, supposed to be from the hand of Benvenuto Cellini. The center of the cover of this box was St. Michael slaying the dragon, and the rest of the framework was fashioned of the writhing body and wings and tail of the beast under his feet. Mark opened this treasure of his small collection and wiped the interior carefully with his handkerchief, and placed within it the withered flower. He smiled as he turned the box about in his hand, and studied for the hundredth time its quaint design. Ah, dear little Joyful, with her world of poetic fancy, her knights valiantly fighting monsters for their noble ladies' sakes, this box with its St. Michael, his drawn sword in his hand and his heel on the dragon's head, was a fitting shrine for her symbol. He replaced the box, turned the key, and then went back to his easel.

Golden Success, with outstretched hands, was hastening Mark Thorn's way during these days, almost unheeded by him because of ideals yet above him, and while these heights were still to climb, he looked with modesty at the distance already covered, which seemed but short, compared with the long vista before him. His work was attracting attention. Critics, scenting popular applause ahead, made haste to prove themselves prophetic, but although being borne rapidly on the high tide of public favor, Mark did not realize it. He was absorbed in striving to reach the soul of art, and fill the artist's true vocation; to play upon the sweetest chords of human life; to stir deadened sympathies and awaken aspiration; to make truer lovers of men and holier beings of women. To this ambition had his long months of waiting and pondering, and study of men's and women's

lives and ambitions, brought him ; to this had the thought given him by the wise little maiden whose image he kept in his heart held him. True, she had been taught to fear him and to fly from him, but he still felt the touch of her clinging arms about his neck, and her tears on his cheek.

In this absorption the long winter finally passed, scarcely intruded upon by the calls of social life, since Mrs. Renolds' departure. The only clew he had to the whereabouts of Joyful was contained in a note his lawyer had received from her hand, postmarked Havana, requesting him to keep the papers intrusted to his care until her return to Boston in the spring, when she would confer with him. Not a word of herself, but even this was better than nothing. It would help him maintain his soul in patience a few months longer, for had not spring returned each year for many hundreds of years, therefore was not the coming of the spring inevitable, and with it the return of love?

March came and passed, so cold and blustering that it brought no winter wanderers home. Mark's aunt Kate had been away from Boston all winter, part of the time with Scott Stevens and Louise, and had written she would not return until the middle of April, but no further word had come from Joyful, and here was April gliding in, tearful and dreamy, and buds were beginning to swell and birds to call. He stopped the lawyer on the street one day, to ask if he had received any word, but his answer was, "No, the young lady wrote she would notify me in the spring, and as the season's half over now I may hear any day."

"You have Mrs. Parsons' address in Boston, have you not? I shall be with her in a few days. Drop me a line there as soon as you hear from Miss Heatherby, will you?"

Mark's impatience knew no bounds. He thought it would be easier to wait in Boston, and if his aunt had not returned, the housekeeper would take him in, and Stokes would look after him; but greatly to his surprise he found her already there domiciled in her home as if she had never left it.

"Yes," she said to Mark, as they sat comfortably before the open fire in the library, waiting for tea to be brought in, "we came earlier than I wrote you — it was too warm in Florida. The heat seemed to be making Nettie ill, and I always grow homesick towards the last. I like to be in my own home with my own things around me."

"Nettie — who is Nettie, an Angora cat, a pug dog, or a girl?"

"Did n't I write to you about her? I meant to."

"No," said Mark, in an injured tone. "I have only had two letters from you, Aunt Kate, since last summer."

"But whose fault is it? That's one more than Aunt Kate has had from you."

He took out his pipe and filled it slowly and carefully, and as he did so, he glanced at her and saw the loving light in her eyes as she watched him. "I've been an ungrateful youngster, Aunt Kate," he said, and gave the log in the fireplace a savage thrust. "Why don't you disown me?"

"Because I want a boy in the home. Come back to Boston and paint, and live with me, Mark."

He drew his chair nearer hers and laughed. "You think I could live with you now in peace, do you? But there would be too much peace, Aunt; you would spoil me and I would grow lazy."

"You've become a tremendous success, Mark. I've been hearing all about it."

"Have I?" he looked at her with some surprise.

"Don't you know it yourself? Every one who keeps up with the times is talking of you. Have n't you seen the magazine articles about you and your studio?"

"Yes, I know about them, of course," he said indifferently.

"And the copies of your last pictures, and the old ones no one would look at three years ago. What a triumph! And the new one of Mr. Thompson's, and the mural work, oh, it is a success. And you knew, and never wrote me a word of it when you knew it would make me so happy. And that one you are doing in New York, is it David before Saul?"

"Yes. I've never seen just the youth David that pleased me in art. Browning's Saul gives the greatest picture." Mark turned to the low bookcase behind him and drew out a copy of Browning. "Here it is," he said, after a moment's search for the place.

"Everything Louise demanded of you, you have become."

"Perhaps, and yet what I have been struggling to attain she never demanded," he said, dreamily. "Well, here it is, my picture, if I can ever paint it. I will put this mark in the place, and you can read it at your leisure. Can I give my country an artist who can paint as Browning wrote? Is the aim too high?"

"No, Mark, not according to Emerson."

They sat silent for a few moments, and Stokes brought in the tea. Mark leaned back and puffed at his pipe, his eyes half closed, and his hand on the arm of his aunt's chair. She did not pour the tea. "I'm waiting for Nettie," she said, "she loves to pour it, and besides I want you to meet her. I wonder why she does n't come down. She's a sensitive creature. We were home just in time for the Thomp-

son housewarming, and I took her with me last night, and while we were there I missed her, and when I found her she was alone in the library before your picture of Hester Prynne at the Trial. She was weeping, and seemed really ill, so I had to fetch her right home; and all this morning she has seemed very sad, and not at all like herself."

The fragrance of Mark's pipe filled the library and floated out into the room beyond, where a young woman paused a moment, hesitating, before with trembling hand she pushed aside the heavy curtains that hung between the two apartments. As she did so, Mark glanced up, then sprang to his feet and flung his pipe in the fireplace, but before he could reach her she swayed forward and sank to the floor a white, unconscious heap.

Mark stooped over her, then gathered her up in his arms and turned to his frightened aunt. "Where shall I take her?" he said.

"To her own room. I'll show you." His aunt called a maid. "Bring the brandy and send Stokes for the doctor immediately," she said.

"He's not here, m'am, he went to find that coachman you spoke of as soon as tea was served."

Mark carried his burden up the stairs and laid her on her own bed. How could he ever open his arms and let her go! Before his aunt came in with restoratives he had kissed her once, and twice, and had seen her eyelids quiver. He must go before she lifted them and saw him there. What terror was in her eyes as she stood before him in that moment. He saw it all, all he must conquer ere he could win her.

"Take the pillow from under her head and let her lie perfectly level," said his aunt, hurrying in with her salts

and brandy. "Open the window, that's right, and you must go for the doctor, Mark, for Stokes is not here."

When the physician came, he pronounced it a simple faint, and gave orders to allow no one to see her and to keep her from all excitement. There was nothing the matter — nothing at all but some nervous strain, some sudden shock — had she had a nervous shock of any kind?

But Mrs. Parsons did not know of any, and she came down to Mark with troubled countenance. "I can't understand it," she said. "She really has a very joyous nature, but since she came back to Boston she has seemed changed, and especially so since last evening. One would think your picture had cast a spell over her." Mark said nothing. He was fumbling about absent-mindedly for his pipe, unaware that he had thrown it in the fire. "You will stay with me, Mark, for a few days, at any rate?"

"If you wish, Aunt Kate, if — it seems best." Then he went out and walked and did not return until dinner.

All that evening he sat at home with his aunt, and she talked to him of "Nettie," yet he said nothing. "Her name is Antoinette, but I always call her Nettie, for she seems like a daughter to me now. Louise found her and was attracted to her. She had been ill in one of the hospitals Louise has an interest in, and that is how I came to know of her. She has been the dearest companion a lonely old lady ever had, so quaint and unexpected that one never tires of her."

Mark smiled. Joyful, his beautiful, wise little maid was here, in the same house with him. To-morrow he would see her; only to wait until to-morrow. But now he must still keep the secret of his heart for her, for her first. He

rested in the present delight of hearing about her, and in thinking how he should win her.

Joyful did not appear at breakfast, and again Mark left the house and wandered restlessly until lunch time. When he returned, his aunt met him, with trouble in her face. "Come here, Mark," she said, handing him a note. "Just read that, and tell me what you think of it. There surely is some mystery in Nettie's life. I have felt all winter that there was something she was keeping back from me. She is gone, Mark; gone without a word, — only that."

"Gone!" He stood before her dazed — overwhelmed.

"Yes, read that."

He took it to the window and stood with his back to the room. The note shook in his hand as he read the pitiful appeal to be allowed to go unsought.

"MY DEAR MRS. PARSONS:

"You have been good to me every moment. How can I ever make you know how I love you and how grateful I am, when I must do this? Mrs. Parsons, I cannot stay here — and I cannot tell you why — and I cannot tell you where I am going — I dare not even trust myself to see you again.

"I can only tell you this: I have a great sorrow in my life that I am not able to speak of. It is very terrible and forces me to hide myself, even from you. You are so beautiful and good. You will trust me. I am not to blame for this, and some day I may be able to see you again, but not now. Forgive me, and do not try to find me; for sometime, when I am strong enough, I will come to you myself and tell you about it. I am leaving now, and will send

for my things. I beg you — I beg you do not search for me.

"I shall love you always, every moment of my life.

"JOYFUL ANTOINETTE HEATHERBY."

"When did she leave?" asked Mark, hoarsely, turning to his aunt.

"This morning, before any one was about. I did not know of it until after you went, and a man came for her things, the maid says, while I was out."

Mark began to draw on his coat, which he had thrown aside as he entered, and seized his hat. "I will find her," he said.

"Wait, Mark. Have luncheon first," said his aunt. And as he knew it was best, he did so.

"I don't even know where she lived before she came to Boston," mourned Mrs. Parsons. "She has been so reticent about herself in that way, and yet she has talked a great deal about her home, too, and her childhood. She must have been a very happy child. She may have gone there, Mark, if only I knew where it is."

Mark's eyes brightened. He would go there first. Perhaps Nathanael and Elizabeth had returned. Surely they could help him. Hence it was with some degree of hope that he kissed his aunt good-bye.

Late that night he arrived in Woodbury Center, tramping across from the station as he had that first time two years before. Spring was full upon them in the country. The smell of newly plowed fields was pleasant, and his heart bounded with hope as he strode in the darkness through the little town. He saw a light in the Drews'

window as he passed, and he went in at the gate and peered through like an alien. Yes, they were there. He saw Elizabeth's beautiful hair shine in the light of the lamp above her head. He saw Nathanael stand with his arm about her, laughing, and Mrs. Drew in her invalid's chair, quiet and happy; but he saw no Joyful, and he turned away. He could not break in on that happy group with his trouble. They would but just have arrived, for he saw an unopened trunk on the little porch, so he took his way sadly to the Somers' boarding house as of old. There, as of old, also, he heard the cream of the village gossip, but of Joyful not a word. It was as if for them she had never existed. The large-nosed young man still came and sat the evening through and listened to Jane Somers playing the piano, but she was still Jane Somers, a little thinner and slightly more pungent, Mark thought.

The next morning Mark started for the cove, but this time he did not even pause at the Drews'. He had no heart just now to see any one to whom he must be civil, until the cry of his heart had been heard. A certain peace came over him as he entered the wagon way through the old woods. There was the spot where he first spied her, sacred to him, and filled with her presence. He gathered some star flowered grasses that grew where she had stood, and walked on with them in his hand. A bluebird fluted its note over his head, and he heard a woodman's ax in the distance.

There was the spot where he had nearly met his death, and a little farther on was the narrow footpath he had taken that noontime when he had finished his morning's painting of Undine under the old beech tree. He took the path again, and his heart beat high. It seemed to him that he

was being guided by an unseen power, as if he were moving forward under an hypnotic spell, and he hastened his steps—he almost ran. At last—at last he must find her. She was there. He saw her in the distance, sitting as before, but this time she was absorbed in no book, only in her own thoughts, and the branches of the trees were bare, and the sunlight streamed warmly over her.

He stood still a moment, and then moved nearer, nearer. She heard him, and, starting from her dream, rose and came a step toward him, with the old look he remembered, of April sun in eyes that had wept; but as suddenly she turned her face from him, and held out both hands as if to ward him off.

"No, no," she cried. "Go back, go back. You must not come here."

But he came on and took the warding hands in his and held them. "I must come to you, Joyful, I must. You can't hide from me any more, darling; you cannot."

She writhed and twisted her hands free, and confronted him. "How dare you!" she said, with trembling, white lips.

Mark feared she would fall as she had before, and he placed his arm about her and led her, too weak to resist, to the seat, and stood beside her. "Listen to me, Joyful," he said, at last controlling his emotion. "I must talk to you a little while, and then, after you have heard me through, if you have anything to condemn me for, I will go. Look at me, Joyful, look in my eyes." She fixed her eyes on his face with the same gaze he had so often felt searching into his very soul, and he took the seat beside her. "Tell me," he said,— "be true with yourself, and be true

with me. Tell me if you see any evil in me. Forget what any one may have said to you, and say truly, before God, if you can think my heart is black."

"Oh, no, Mr. Thorn, I can't. That is why I dared not see you," she said, with a long-drawn sigh, as of one who had fought to the end of his strength. "I can't, Mr. Thorn; why did you come here?"

"Because I love you, and I must come here. Every hour, every moment since I saw you last, you have been in my heart. I have searched for you. I went to Europe, thinking I was following you, only to learn too late that I was leaving you behind. Dearest one, why can't you trust me?"

"That is it. That is the terrible thing. How can you ask me, when you know? Once I trusted you. Once you seemed like a god to me. I was glad whenever I thought about you, I never thought whether you loved me or not, it was that you seemed so great and good. Everything you said was like a beautiful story, full of delight to me — and then — and — then — I learned such terrible things of you, of how you had the power to hide your real self, and — can you think how terrible it is? Can you? I learned you were no true knight, such as I had dreamed you were, and my heart died in me, for the world is terrible — I learned what you knew all the time, and did not care anything about, how people crush each other, and let each other suffer from day to day under their hands. They forget what they are, they never seem to think what they might be, and just go on and live for such strange things. They seem to live as if they were only bodies, and forget there is anything besides. They don't seem even to know

how to be really happy, and yet they laugh a great deal. All the time I have longed so for this sweet place. It has seemed the only safe place in all the earth, and now, when I have come back to it, you —" she stopped speaking, and leaned toward him a long moment, with parted lips and heightened color, still gazing in his eyes, which glowed on hers through tears. Suddenly she placed her two hands on his breast and her face drew nearer his.

"Mr. Thorn," she said in a low voice, "I do not believe it, I cannot. You are true, you are good. You could not sit here and look at me like that, with such wickedness in your heart — I know it — I feel it here — in your heart I feel it, and in mine."

Then he caught her to his breast, and she rested there, sobbing. It was over — the sorrow and the fear. The delicious moment came to him for which he could have given his life, the reward of his waiting love. She clung to him. She would not lift her head nor look in his eyes again, and when he tried to tell her all and explain away her doubts, she would not listen to him.

"I can't have you tell me. I would rather trust you without being told. It is sweet to be able to trust in this way, just as we trust God. He does n't tell us everything, only leads us, and we find things come right."

"Joyful," Mark said in wonder, "why did you change so suddenly, before I had a chance to make even one little explanation?"

She tossed back the hair he had disheveled and looked at him through tear-dimmed lashes. "Because all at once it seemed as if your soul was crying out to mine and telling me the truth. All at once, Mark, as if we were both made

of glass and could see each other's truth through the windows of our eyes. I felt my distrust of you was a shame in me, and yet, how could I do otherwise, when — when — there was so much —" again she hid her face from his, where he loved to have it hidden — where he had so longed to hold her — where he felt she belonged.

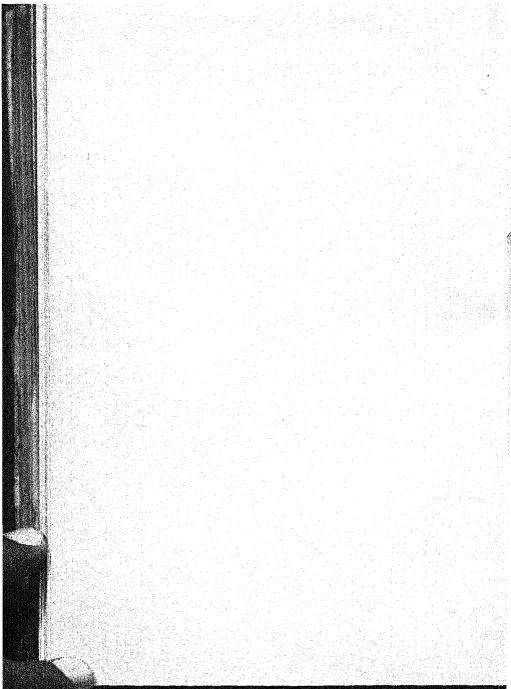
"Tell me all about it, Joyful, from the very beginning."

So she told him all the story of those two years, beginning with the hour when he had found her, and she had poured out her heart to him in her terrible need.

"And why did you leave my aunt? Why did n't you give me a chance there to speak for myself?"

"Because of something in myself. I could not hate you — I had tried. I did not dream you really loved me; how could I? And even if I had, I would still have feared you, for something within me kept drawing me to think of you; and when I was alone, or in the dark, I seemed to feel you near me, as you were that time you found me and helped me. I thought I was wicked not to be able to hate you — but I could not."

"I thank God for it," he said. Ah, the sweet confession! What more could he ask for his two years of anxious waiting? He lifted her face to his. "Don't say any more, sweet — all the terrible past is ended, and heaven is opened for you and me."



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